DARKNESS FROM THE EAST

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BY

SERGE DE CHESSIN

TRANSLATED BY

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TO

HENRI MASSIS

DEFENDER OF THE WEST

PREFACE

IMAGINE a party which is not merely political, but has its own metaphysics and theology, its own doctrine of art, philosophy of history, and theory of literature. Such a party will have little contribution to make to any of these branches of human thought. They will all be subordinated to a set of sterile but imperative conventions. This was the conclusion of M. Pierre Lasserre, writing when the conception was purely hypothetical. Since 1917, however, the party has actually existed. It is the Communist Party. Not only has it all these things; it has its own theory of the origin of the universe and its own code of morals. The Bolshevik profession of faith covers everything. The *Credo* bequeathed by Lenin embraces all fields of thought and applies to life in all its manifestations, so that he who would aspire to the title of true Communist must not only acknowledge the omnipotence of proletarian dictatorship, he must confess its absolute omniscience.

The 'Red' doctrine thus recalls those rudimentary forms of religion in which all aspects of a primitive civilization are compressed into a few ridiculously simplified formulæ within the compass of the undeveloped mind. It marks a set-back and a paralysis of progress. Extreme in its expression, it really embodies the worst form of reaction, a sort of police tyranny against the freedom of the mind; professing to be

revolutionary and dynamic, it represents the worst form of stagnation, a petrification of thought. It is no longer light that comes from the East; it is night, dense night, total darkness, a new Mongol invasion, but on the spiritual plane this time. The Apocalyptic horsemen advance from a Bolshevized Asia.

It is not only the grey matter of the European brain that is threatened; the bacillus of a hitherto unknown moral dissolution is being spread. Nauseating as are some of the realities of the Soviet system, it becomes a necessity of preventive medicine to throw the light of day upon these hideous and suppurating wounds, for if the propaganda of the Third International should succeed we shall see Darwinism, pressed into the service of 'scientific Marxism,' doing in other European countries what it has done in Russia. Citizens, marked on the forehead with the Star of the Soviet, will transform themselves into lecherous and grimacing apes. Bolshevism is a universal doctrine; it is also a general intoxication, a monstrous leprosy that degrades the soul and corrupts the mind.

These are the truths which it is the object of this book to prove, and the proof is taken from actual examples in a country which has been thrust back to the days of the cave-dwellers, but in which the caves are also *lupanars*.

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PART I

PHILOSOPHY IN THE SERVICE OF BOLSHEVISM

Chapter One

THE METAPHYSICS OF CLASS CONFLICT

THE title of this chapter may appear at first sight surprising, in that it attributes philosophical ambitions to Bolshevism. What, it may be asked, is the Russian Revolution except a blind and chaotic 'general upset'? Why try to connect its brutal negations and its hasty improvisations with any metaphysical or scientific view of the universe? *Le grand soir* surely needs no cosmological justification!

The men who preside over the destinies of Russia and of the world revolution would smile contemptuously at these questions. Doctrinaires or executioners, they all claim to deal in ideas. Lacking any academic training and fitting into no recognized circle, they are all 'intellectuals,' with undisciplined brains and unlimited ambitions. It is not hard to imagine the ravages wrought in such volcanic soil by the poison of Hegel and Marx, those spiritual fathers of the Russian frenzy. Whole generations of revolutionaries had mingled their abstractions with the field of their future labours before they got to actual grips with realities, and the ammunition vans placed at the disposal of Lenin and his friends by the German General Headquarters carried a veritable consignment of metaphysical poison 'made in Germany.' Russia was predestined to be the field of experiment of schemes worked out in exile. In his very

earliest works, such as *Chto Delat?* (*What Then Shall We Do?*), Lenin had declared that there must be a theory at the root of every revolutionary movement worthy of the name. "The party," he declared in so many words, "can fulfil its militant function only if it is guided by a theory." He repudiated disdainfully the "release of irrational social forces" which "weaken the importance of the conscious elements of the proletariat."

Revolution, then, is a science, and, as such, it may be taught, like mineralogy or botany. It has its own method, its training centres, its experimental laboratories. Mainly self-taught, the Bolshevik leaders make a veritable fetish of lectures and courses of study. *Ex cathedra* teaching, in their eyes, has the irresistible power of transforming words promptly into action. Hence the extraordinary number of high schools for turning out doctors who shall be trained revolutionary technicians, the Sverdloff and Zinovieff Universities, the People's Universities of the West and of the East, the Socialist Academy, the Karl Marx Institute, the Grand Academy of Propaganda, the Faculty of Social Sciences at the First State University, the Institute of Red Professors, the political courses for the Higher Command at the General Staff Academy, and, finally, the network of 'working-class faculties' known as the *Rabfaki*.

While the programmes in these Sorbonnes of direct action include instruction in such practical matters as the strategy of street-fighting and the art of burning down *bourgeois* institutions, the professors lose them-

selves at every step in a maze of speculation. They are pushed irresistibly by the inherent vice of their training to give absolute values to the revolutionary drama and its principal personalities. The proletariat and the *bourgeoisie* take on the character of philosophical entities and fight each other in an eternal intellectual warfare, without any relation to actual facts. Nothing could be more like medieval scholasticism, from which, indeed, Bolshevik science has borrowed its jargon and its forms of reasoning; it is thoroughly impregnated with an outworn metaphysics.

For the last five years these archaic forms have been aggravated by the extravagant glorification of one man. Lenin's posthumous glory has eclipsed even that which he enjoyed as head of the cult and of the State at the very zenith of his Communist autocracy. If he could say, while he lived, "Le Bolchevisme, c'est moi," the identification has since become more complete. Karl Marx remains, it is true, the great initiator; nobody denies him the glory of having pointed the proletariat toward the promised land, but to Lenin and to Lenin alone belongs the honour of having extracted from Marxism its revolutionary quintessence and led the chosen class to the Communist Judea. In the Muscovite terminology Lenin has been the executor 'on a planetary scale'; in the upheaval of a catastrophe without precedent he has proved his doctrine by an experiment which cannot be challenged. Modified and checked, this new Marxism claims its position henceforth as the only orthodox dogma of all revolutions; outside the Russian interpretation there is nothing

but heresy and treason. Listen to Zinovieff as he stands beside Lenin's coffin:

> We are the world's richest inheritors. No political party has ever received a heritage comparable to ours. How blind are they who dare to draw a parallel between Lenin and Napoleon, Peter I, and Cromwell! . . . All these historical characters were miserable dwarfs beside our giant. . . . *Without Lenin Karl Marx would not be Karl Marx to-day.*[1]

This is not mere graveside rhetoric; it corresponds to an imperious doctrinal and political necessity. Some days before he lost himself in a mental Nirvana the moribund Lenin gave this counsel to his disciples: "Above all, avoid schism in the Communist Party. . . . Maintain pure and intact the authority of the Central Committee." These words reveal the tactical skill of the dying man. He understood perfectly that to dominate a country of small rural producers the Communist Party, itself a tiny minority, must remain 'a pillar without a crack.' He knew that if the solid revolutionary column gave at a single point the General Staff that he had so laboriously constituted would break up, and the days of the Soviet dictatorship would be numbered. As long as he was in full possession of his mental faculties he was able to make up, by his incomparable casuistry, for the twistings and the weakness of the doctrine. He was able even to impose his authority upon the mortal jealousies which devoured his disciples, to counteract their depravity, their meanness, their futility. The truth is that it was Lenin alone, thanks to his prestige as the revolutionary Pope, who was able to give to

[1] *Petrogradskaya Pravda*, No. 288, 1924.

the Communist Party the appearance of a solid pillar. Hence the desperate efforts of Communism at bay, during the two years of Lenin's illness, to galvanize a 'living corpse.' His brain reduced to pulp, his mouth twisted into an idiot grin, Lenin remained a symbol and a standard. From time to time, in order to hide the final mental collapse of the great chief, the Bolshevist *camarilla* would drag up some old unpublished article. It did not hesitate to forge articles in the style of the paralytic and, when too sinister rumours alarmed the mob, to tour a complacent double through the streets, sitting in a motor-car with Madame Krupskaya at his side.

The apotheosis of Lenin is dictated by the same necessities as this *macabre* carnival. This time it has been necessary, in order to secure the survival of the doctrine, to galvanize a real corpse. The remains of Lenin rest in a place of honour to which no Tsar would have dared to aspire, at the entrance to the Kremlin, in the very heart of Russia, facing the monument of Minin and Pojarsky, saviours of old Muscovy. The troops present arms to him, red flags are spread; recruits fix their eyes on the tomb of the prophet as they take the oath to the proletarian Fatherland. To betray the Fatherland would amount to the double crime of treason to the memory of Lenin and to the principles of Leninism. The doctrine is identified with the man, whose lightest word, whose every jest, has become an infallible criterion. A special institute has just been dedicated to the study of the Leninist system. It is an enormous building, in the Cenotaph style so dear to Bolshevik architects, and

its five floors accommodate a library of 600,000 volumes, a complete collection of Lenin's works—759 editions in 140 languages—and a whole army of expositors, casuists, and scribblers. It is the Temple of Communism. Before the Sacred Ark there are safes and iron-bound reliquaries, where 13,135 manuscripts of the Master are fading—a sort of Red *torah*. Never, it must be confessed, have the Marxians treated with less ceremony a fundamental principle of their own doctrine by according so much historic importance to an individual; but it is equally true that no founder of a cult or head of a State ever impressed his personality so indelibly on his work.

Bolshevik Russia is flesh of the flesh of Lenin; everything bears his mark and signature; everywhere are the stigmata of a paternity that cannot be denied. The U.S.S.R. has no official thought apart from Lenin. It has espoused his mental habits, even down to his grimaces and his eccentricities. A psychological link pushed to this degree argues a pre-established harmony between the mental structure of Lenin and the very details of the Communist philosophy. To understand the latter it is indispensable to study the monstrous prism through which for twelve years the light has been split up in the eyes of Russians.

The term 'monstrous' is not used here in any prejudicial sense. Lenin belongs to the world of mental monsters as surely as Siamese twins belong to that of physical abnormalities. He is the crowning achievement and the incarnation of all that the Russian revolutionaries since Chaadaeff have bequeathed of moral Nihilism and intellectual cynicism to their successors. One can

see a foreshadowing of Lenin in the prodigious visionary who was proclaimed mad by a ukase of Nicholas I; or again in the prophetic fictions of Turgenev and Dostoieffsky, the scientific aridity of a Bayeroff, the contemptuous cynicism of a Verkhoffensky, the gutter atheism of a Smerdiakoff. Lenin's mental hypertrophy, however, is developed on a background of *tabula rasa* that the novelists could hardly imagine, a sentimental and moral negation which permitted a degree of licence hitherto undreamed of in the history of mental debauchery and the somersaults of arrogance.

According to Chaadaeff,

> Russia belongs neither to Europe nor to Asia, neither to the West nor to the East; she has no traditions; she has never acquired the humanities; never learned in the divine school of history. A people without relationships, with no past and no memory, we have never caught the habit of civilization; we have the air of nomads, and, lacking any spiritual attachments, we camp in our bivouacs. Everything is lacking to us: memories that give charm to the adolescence of a nation, figures of legend, and the lessons of experience.

Reduced to the measure of a single individual, this terrible diagnosis holds the key to Leninist psychology. Ulianoff, the great luminary of the night of Bolshevism, has impressed himself beyond the bounds of space and time, beyond civilization, outside humanity. His Olympian figure knows no laws and no categories. Not a breath of poetry, not a quiver of pity, no trace of tradition or historical nostalgia—a thinking-machine placed in front of a vivisection table. It is a reliable machine, certainly, with flawless works, but it has the

inherent vice of machines, even the most perfect—blind specialization, brutal simplification, the strangling of initiative.

Joseph de Maistre had already expressed the fear lest the Russian unrest should find a "University Pugachoff." That great writer was mistaken only in the degree of education of the revolutionaries. The Bolshevik Pugachoff is an elementary school product. Despite the powerfulness of his thought and the scientific setting of his books Lenin always displayed the characteristics of the State elementary school—the disdainful cocksureness, the sublime assertions, the psychological inability to hear the other side. He appealed much more to memory than to reason. "Don't dig deep into the revolutionary principles," he would repeat. "Be content to learn them by heart."[1] Trotsky insisted a good deal on this "faculty of being deaf and blind to everything alien to the end in view," the superb indifference of Lenin toward "secondary causes and accidental circumstances." Mental degeneration more and more aggravated Lenin's inveterate tendency to monomania, and his last speeches were a sad collection of pleonasms, served out by a mad executioner.

To disguise the nakedness of these obsessions Lenin adopted a style which accentuated their shamelessness, a mixture of algebraic signs and obscene trivialities. He never despised a bantering and ultra-popular tone in his cynicism, which was the most perfect expression of the congenital Mephistophelianism of the Russian Revolution. The slightest sign of an intellectual, artistic,

[1] Complete works, Book XV, p. 24.

or literary aristocracy never failed to draw a mocking grimace from Lenin; he put out his tongue at poetry, and was ready to cast the flowers of life under the heavy boots of the peasant. Raised to the height of power, he was content at the Kremlin with a study little more comfortable than his garret at Zürich or Carouge: a writing-table, some cane-bottomed chairs, a well-worn armchair, and on the walls a few diagrams and maps. There was only one portrait—that of Karl Marx—and one ornament, a bronze monkey holding a human skull in its paws, as a symbol of Darwinism. In vain does Moscow display her Byzantine enchantments outside those windows. . . . To the prophet in the shabby coat, who munches a crust of black bread between two meetings of the Executive Committee, the universe is reduced to these diagrams and maps and this gorilla, first ancestor of the conquering proletariat. Thought, adapted to the needs of comrades who would put out their cigarettes against the walls of the Gobelins, loses its halo, and behind the Mongol mask you can hear the sneer of the eternal Smerdiakoff of *The Brothers Karamazoff*.

It is not only the morals of the Communist Party that have been irreparably depraved by all this mad lust of destruction; it has rotted the brain and corrupted the reasoning processes. Whether we turn to science, to philosophy, or to current politics we find the same violence imposed upon facts to force them into the Procrustean bed of Marxism, the same exploitation of the lowest instincts and the most odious promiscuities. In the service of the Cause everything is permissible,

collaboration with the Ochrana, with the enemy's General Staff, with foreign banks, with common criminals. Did not Verkhoffensky, one of Dostoieffsky's "Possessed," discover a revolutionary agent in the convict Fedka? Lenin has only pushed to its extreme limit this indulgence toward gaol-birds.

Drawing-room agitators, the snobs of the Communist movement, ought to read and reread *Years of Victory and Defeat*, by Vladimir Voitinsky, with its staggering testimony to the moral and intellectual ravages of the Muscovite sectarianism:

> Revolutions are not made with clean hands or in white gloves. The Communist Party must not be judged by the mean standards of *bourgeois* morality. A good-for-nothing may be useful to us precisely because he is a good-for-nothing. A bandit, a criminal, is more useful on the barricades than a Plekhanoff.[1] . . . Look at Comrade Victor, he is an invaluable revolutionary. He is kept by the wife of a wealthy tradesman in order to be able to give money to the party. . . . Sergius Malycheff is an excellent deputy; he is ready if necessary to punch the head of the President of the Duma.

Thus does Bolshevism build up its philosophy.

[1] Head of the Russian Social Democratic Party.

Chapter Two

A MOB THEOCRACY

LENINIST philosophy, as we have seen, is essentially a class philosophy. It has to supply ready-made answers to the superficial questionings of the illiterate. Let the *bourgeoisie* pursue its empty dreams! The worker, attending a meeting at the end of his day's work, must be put in a position to answer all riddles, solve all mysteries; and philosophy, adapting itself to his needs, must be ready to put out the stars and trample on the earth. There is no truth beyond the visible realities of every day which are within the direct perception of the proletariat. Anything which goes beyond this barbarous materialism is a frivolous capitalist luxury.

Every day such popular newspapers as *Bednota* and *Dereffenskaya* contain a column in which the riddles of the universe are solved in the terminology of the public meeting. The creation of the world is as simple as, let us say, the expropriation of a bank. The Leninist method of argument, whose excessive simplification was the subject of a reproach by Trotsky, lights up the darkness of world problems with an arc-lamp. All fine shades of meaning disappear from the crude materialist theories which, as we shall see later, are offered to the peasant as an appendix to the Soviet constitution. As usual, the product of the elementary school demands

more from science than it can give. "A working electrician who lights a whole town by turning a switch," writes Lunacharsky, "is in no danger of believing any longer that God created the sun."

He is not joking. Even to the most cultivated of the Bolshevist leaders Leninism is inseparable from a sort of revolutionary *apriorism*. The gorilla that grimaces from its place of honour on Lenin's table presides over all the official philosophy. "What do we not teach at the Sverdloff Communist University?" asks *Izvestia*.

> Geography, statistics, the history of the working-class movement, physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, astronomy, geology, historic materialism. . . . A school of social science, this university gives nevertheless a high place to the natural sciences. . . . Its professors know admirably how to implant materialistic conceptions of the universe in the brain of a youth fresh from the anvil and the plough. The essence of materialism is in a series of glass jars from the *infusoria*, up to the ape and to man. . . . The whole of Marxism in a glass jar!

At the Institute of Red Professors, charged with the duty of preparing a body of instructors worthy of the confidence of the Soviet, the embryo professors have to follow a general course in the "foundations of Marxism"—dialectic, historical, sociological, and economic materialism—before deciding on their special subject. How ambitious are the claims of Communism may be judged from the words of Professor Pokroffsky, Director of the Institute, in defence of its curriculum:

> It is, in fact, only Marxism that reaches the level of a science, for it alone obeys the laws of the natural sciences.

> . . . While all other methods represent simply the ideas of the dominant classes, Marxism is an organized adaptation of man to the material conditions of existence.[1]

This explains the logical attachment of the Leninist system to the most vulgar forms of materialism. If social well-being is to be successfully achieved the Revolution must relieve its *clientèle* of all worries likely to distract it from its practical concerns. How are the desires of humanity to be cramped within the circle of purely material things unless matter is the alpha and the omega of the Bolshevized universe? Spiritual doctrine becomes a 'class enemy.' The proletariat has no use for doctrines which deal with invisible forces and impalpable presences. Like Heine, it "leaves the skies to the sparrows." It is on this world, swept clean of parasites, renovated by civil war, and enriched by a close collaboration between man and the machine that it will build the true Kingdom of Heaven, that Red paradise which Lenin foreshadowed in the edifying formula: "Communism plus electrification." When an American tractor arrives in some corner of the Federated Republic the members of the local Communist 'cell' parade the palpitating mechanism through the streets, followed by 'class-conscious' peasants, waving red ribbons and bleating the *Internationale*; the Leninist Eden sets its gates ajar.

On the occasion of the jubilee of the Red Academy in 1925 Kameneff, who was then the second figure in

[1] The programmes of some of the workers' faculties deal with the "biological foundations of dialectic materialism," and the "biological foundations of political economy."

the Republic, was deputed by the Central Committee to give Communism its official certificate of identity. "Revolution," he declared, to the delegates from foreign academies,

> is not *a* science ; it is Science, Science with a capital S. Never forget that scientific methods are at the base of our work. Savants have broken up the solar system, the sun's rays, the atom. We are following their example in splitting the State and capitalist society into their component parts. We are called criminals for this analytical work, but were not Galileo and Darwin before us accused of having violated the order of things? We are proud to walk hand in hand with Galileo, Darwin, Newton, and Laplace. We are proud of having applied to social phenomena the principles of the universal law of change. Science teaches us that all things are in a state of flux, and the working class has ratified that truth.

Pokroffsky deigns to admit :

> Of course a microscope remains a microscope, whether it is used by a *bourgeois* or by a proletarian. The nature of the observations is independent of the particular class to which the operator belongs, whereas in social, historical, and economic investigations full weight must be given to social divergences.

Only a Communist can become a savant capable of elaborating a general theory of the world. Leninism lies at the root of all knowledge. It is the primordial Word, Truth itself.

Here, however, we find ourselves faced with the flaw in the scientific construction of the doctrine. Leninism may flourish its physiological theories, but, for all its pretensions to rationalism, its philosophy reveals the *bourgeois* taint *par excellence*—nothing less than religion !

Under a veneer of scientific terminology it is really a second-rate expression on the revolutionary plane of current religious conceptions. Has it not its Creed, its faithful, its Messiahs, its Church?

In the vanguard of the Republic we encounter the watchwords of the Middle Ages: no science without philosophy, and no philosophy without religion. Darwinian materialism has been erected into an article of faith. "I believe in the earth," writes one of the accredited bards of the Kremlin, Luka Pufiloff.... The earth, vast implement of the proletariat, eternal source of all joy, fruitful breast of labouring humanity. As others put their trust in God, Bolshevism puts its trust in matter, its Providence, the first and last cause of its whole system. To complete its defences it finds itself at grips with the most metaphysical, the most religious, of all problems—that of the existence of evil. 'Scientific Marxism' may whisper its dilettante solutions—"the results of natural selection," "a phenomenon like any other," and so on. Bolshevism here turns its back resolutely on the *infusoria* in the Sverdloff University. It finds the first cause of injustice and suffering in original sin. The only modification it introduces into an essentially scriptural conception is to give it a revolutionary colouring. The original sin is of an economic character, consisting in the individual ownership of material things. In short, it is private property. The idea of original sin, however, leads direct to that of redemption, and historical materialism has not been able to resist taking the step. Only, in place of a race chosen by God to bring forth the Messiah, it is a social class

which becomes the Marxian Israel. Chosen vehicle of truth, the proletariat "taketh away the sins of the world"; crucified under the species of successive revolutionary generations, it ends by bringing upon the international stage a victorious prophet.

Nothing, it will be observed, is lacking in this purely religious ideology of historical materialism: not even the belief in a future life! The Kingdom of Heaven on earth presents itself in the form of a universal republic of proletarian Soviets. In order to ensure that their class shall enjoy this hypothetical paradise the workers are invited to be "toiling up new Calvaries ever" in blind obedience to their chiefs.

For, dead or living, those chiefs are infallible. There is one God—Karl Marx—and Lenin is his prophet, and the Communist Party his Church. Such are the practical consequences of Marxian materialism in its mad desire to be a universal system. The Kremlin sets itself up as a "Peasant Vatican," Moscow takes the place of Jerusalem, Rome, and Mecca. Holy Synod of Unrest, the executive committee of the Third International, united to the Political Bureau of the Communist Party, assures the continuity of the traditions and the purity of the doctrine. No straying from the strait and narrow path is permitted to the flock. At the least sign of schism the high priests issue their bulls, from which there is no appeal. Like a second revelation, the revolutionary dogma stands apart from human changes. Its catechumens have only to kneel before the tables of the Law and kiss the toes of its interpreters.

We can understand now the last mumblings from a

stricken brain: "Avoid schisms. . . . Maintain intact and pure the authority of the Central Committee." Lenin left a magnificent testament. He made his disciples into apostles, he founded a religion, built a Church. It is, perhaps, in this ecclesiastical structure, forced upon the Communist Party, that his inveterate cynicism found its full expression. Even when he postulated the divine right of the worker as the source of his power Lenin did not disguise a complete contempt for his *clientèle*. He always held that the proletariat, left to its own resources, was incapable of achieving its Messianic destiny. To conduct this mental deficient to the summits of world-domination Lenin had to surround it with hierophants, who were also policemen, and impose the discipline of the Cheka.

Here we have the true nature of the Bolshevik philosophy clearly revealed. It is not only a religion represented by a Church. In the last resort it amounts to the establishment of a veritable theocracy. For all its impressive front view, revolutionary speculation, as Lenin understood it, could make terms with the crude philosophy of a board-school Radical. Imagine for a moment M. Homais[1] invested with unlimited temporal and spiritual power. Imagine him at one and the same time the Lama and the Tamerlaine of Communism. The entire universe would be reduced by ukase to the least common denominator of Marxism. The Ochrana would be mobilized in the service of 'free thought,' it would imprison awkward facts and send hostile doctrines

[1] M. Homais, a free-thinking chemist in *Madame Bovary*, is the type of the stupid *bourgeois* with 'a little learning.'—TRANSLATOR.

to the gallows. Following the example of that Sergius Malycheff so much admired by Lenin for his proletarian biceps, Bolshevism would not content itself with "punching the head of the President of the Duma"; it would punch the heads of savants and priests, it would set a gay crowd, led by convicts like Fedka or pimps like Victor, to the assault on the libraries; it would desecrate icons, crosses, books. It would prosecute God for the crime of being counter-revolutionary.

So-called 'scientific' Marxism ends in the "Kingdom of the Cad," contemplated by Merejkoffsky, of the cad, elevated to the summits of a complete autocracy and a universal infallibility, crowned patriarch, emperor, and president of all the academies, lolling on the throne with his feet on the altars and rolling a wad of vile tobacco in a page of the Gospels or of Plato.

Chapter Three

THE POWERS OF DARKNESS

IT is one of the unquestioned first principles of historical materialism that the proletariat is instinctively atheist, Marxian, and Darwinian. In order to subjugate it more effectually the *bourgeoisie* has suffocated these primitive instincts with the artificialities of creeds and observances, and made religion into " an opium for the people." The duty of the State-Providence is to dissipate the fumes of this narcotic; it nationalizes truth just as it does banks and railways.

To Dostoieffsky's ecstatic act of faith in the Russian people as " the God-bearer " these inverted Messianists of the Slav school oppose the terrible letter of Belinsky to Gogol:

> The Russian people is supposed to be the most religious of the peoples of the world. . . . It is a deception! The Russian is quite ready to appeal to high Heaven in an attitude of the most extreme abjection. He will tell you that an icon is useful for saying your prayers, but has no practical use, even as a saucepan lid. If you examine this nation well you will find it profoundly atheistic. There is plenty of superstition, but not a trace of religion.

Naturally the Bolshevik theorists have had little difficulty in drawing conclusions favourable to their propaganda from this and similar texts. In the peasant, cured of his Byzantine witchcraft, Marxism has found

the born apostle of scientific atheism. But how long has it been necessary for scientific atheism to celebrate Black Masses and organize Witches' Sabbaths? Since when have blasphemies acquired the value of negations?

In *Bezbojnik*, the official organ of the anti-religious propaganda, we have a devilry of the gutter. The outpourings of drunken iconoclasts fill its pages, metrical parodies of the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, pot-house jokes about the Bible and the Gospel, and a flood of obscenity about the Blessed Virgin. The illustrations are indescribable. It is all of a piece. Churches transformed into Communist clubs often retain their internal arrangement for purposes of ridicule as well as their spires and crosses. In place of the sacred images, however, portraits of Marx, Stalin, and Bukharin adorn the gilded frames on the iconostasis, a bust of Lenin reposes on the red-draped altar, and along the walls are obscene caricatures and filthy mottoes.

Occasionally some devout soul will stray into one of these profaned temples, deceived by its exterior, only to rub his eyes before the antics of the Muscovite *tricoteuses*, and ask if he is not the victim of some diabolical optical illusion. Finally the nasal notes of some negroid 'melody' on a gramophone will drive him out, crossing himself to repel the Evil One.

Imagine what happens on the great festivals, Christmas and Easter, when the church is filled with the smoke of incense and still vibrates to the notes of the Slav Liturgy. The bells that should ring out their message of the birth or the resurrection of Christ summon into the streets a sordid carnival of blasphemers. From year to year it

is the same masquerade of grimacing demoniacs. Two deacons with scarlet copes usually lead the procession, swinging their thuribles and shouting: "To the attack on heaven!" Behind them a red-draped lorry carries "the International of the Gods." Osiris jostles with Mithra, and Allah with Buddha; Jehovah is represented as a down-at-heels Rabbi with a gigantic eye on his forehead. Christ, in a top-hat—symbol of capitalism—and a monocle, is absorbed in the study of *Das Kapital*, while a pregnant woman of the streets from one of the suburbs usually impersonates the Virgin Mary and nurses a doll representing a soldier of the Red Army.

Amid an uproar of cymbals, rattles, and whistles the Communist saturnalia carries on its infamies. The Pope, with a train of staggering cardinals in front, blesses the crowd with a bottle; witches ride on brooms with rubicund monks behind them; Dominicans disport themselves with Protestant pastors; dancing dervishes represent Rabbis. But the predominant figure is the parish priest, adorned with sacerdotal ornaments—these last the fruit of the pillage of the churches. Some of the processionists are seated on black coffins loaded with sacred relics, others, with the bit in their teeth, are goaded on by demons; still others are led along muzzled by 'class-conscious' proletarians.

Sometimes the *cortège* will pause to hold a mock service. In front of an altar bespattered with masonic stars a 'bishop' will intone in the orthodox manner a litany in honour of Karl Marx, while a crowd of buffoons waves burning incense and shouts the most extravagant blasphemies. Finally all the gods are collectively

sentenced to death and burned in effigy, while a dancing mob of interlaced executioners and prostitutes in religious garb sing the *Internationale*.

In the evening there is a fresh mobilization of all the sections and atheist 'cells' to hear lectures on the impossibility of miracles, parodies of the Gospel from the platforms of Communist clubs, "high-class cabarets—admission free to those in anti-religious costume." It is the last word in scientific atheism, jazz at the service of materialist propaganda. But had not the Middle Ages their witches' dances, and have not these orgies always proved the existence of Antichrist rather than the non-existence of God?

"The peasants regard us as emissaries of Lucifer," write the soldiers to *Izvestia*. "They will speak to us only with onions in their pockets—an infallible remedy against the temptations of the devil."

According to the *Rabochi Pout*, the peasants have their daughters rebaptized when they are courted by officials of the Soviet. All over the U.S.S.R. the countryside will give itself up to a St Bartholomew's Day massacre of *selkori*, or rural correspondents, of the Moscow papers, who are really agitators and police spies, and are regarded by the peasants as monsters thrown up from the infernal regions. Even in the precincts of the Kremlin terrifying stories are whispered from mouth to mouth, in which the Communist is identified with the devil. A member of the Komsomol (League of Communist Youth), it is said, has a tongue swollen up like a trunk, in punishment for his blasphemies; a child has been born with cloven hooves in a Commissary's family, an official

lecturer has been turned into a frog and goes about croaking, while dominating all other tales is the story of the "Red Infantryman," which has spread all over Russia.

A demobilized trooper, it is said, returned to his native village, and his first act was to break up the icons. It will be excellent, he said, for preparing a hot vapour bath—one of those Russian baths, in which the bather stays for hours, flicking himself with a birch-rod, in the atmosphere of an oven. But the hours lengthened into days. . . . A terrible itching attacked the skin of the unfortunate Communist, branches stuck to his fingers, a sinister power prevented him from moving. In vain the peasants, anxious to rescue him, tried to force the door; the wood, like living flesh, "all the while ran blood." That bath, the peasants will tell you, must go on for five-and-twenty years; it will continue until the end of the Soviet *régime*. A somewhat unexpected result, is it not, of meditations on "The ABC of Communism"!

In the full glory of Socialism the end of the world is always at hand, and every now and then a wave of panic will spread through the depths of the country. If an aerolite falls the peasants prostrate themselves before the sign of the Prophet. "Elias!" cry some, while others declare that it is the moon, which has fallen from heaven at last. All agree in attributing the phenomenon to the wrath of Heaven. "These wretches have sold our district to the devil, and we are punished with a 6000-pood[1] boulder." A good half of the Russian

[1] A pood is about 36 pounds.—TRANSLATOR.

people detect the premonitory signs of the Day of Judgment, and believe they hear the blast of the Last Trumpet. "A nation that denies God," declare the peasants solemnly to *Pravda*, "is doomed to destruction. A great wave will sweep over our plains and destroy us." This prophecy, in December 1925, plunged Moscow in such a state of consternation that the People's Commissaries caused an official denial to be issued by the celebrated geologist, A. Pavloff, of the Academy. But what are academicians and geologists to the peasants? Here a "flaming fowl" has rushed through space, there the Soviets have been destroyed by the locusts of Holy Writ. The most grotesque stories find credence among a crowd of visionaries. Anything will serve as a pretext for increasing alarm, everything has a mysterious and tragic meaning. Even the progress of science and the benefits of civilization are no more in the hands of Communism than a curse of Beelzebub.

In the great famine in 1921 the chief objects of the fury of the crowd were the meteorological stations, those inventions of the Soviets which "tempted Providence and kept the rain away." [1] Mobs of peasants exhumed the bodies of sinners who had died without the last sacraments, and made candles with fat from the corpses. Always there is the same black magic, the same astounding practices. In the country where materialism has been elevated to a State religion the fitting up of telegraph-wires is taken to be an indication of the approaching end of all things. "Our fathers said the world would come to an end when the earth was all

[1] *Krasnaya Gazeta*, July 21.

twisted up in wires." In the land of 'scientific atheism' there are Communists who, refusing to believe in God, have no doubt about the interference of the devil in human affairs. *Izvestia* of April 17, 1925, records that the president of an executive committee, having noted that witches were becoming increasingly numerous and daring, had a peasant woman arrested on a charge of entering the houses of 'responsible' comrades by way of the chimney, and making their cows sterile by the use of magic incantations. As the sorceress denied being in relations with the Evil One she was submitted to all the refinements of the ordeal, the local militia assisting. When this kind of thing is possible there are no limits to the extravagances of peasant hysteria. A sick person has only to become delirious to be suspected of relations with the devil. At Porochvy, near Petrograd, the peasants crucified unfortunate victims of fever, after immersing them in water; the parish priest, who endeavoured to prevent these violent methods of exorcism, was himself accused of being under the influence of the devil.

It is not only the powers of darkness, however, that the people invoke against Communism. Recent recruits to Bolshevism, brought into the party under the name of "the Leninist promotion"—that is to say, the young workmen, whom one might expect to offer the least resistance to the claims of materialism—display a strange disquietude in matters of doctrine. In the course of a meeting in which about 2000 Communist catechumens took part Comrade Zorin found himself asked eighty-six questions, of which twenty-three had to do with religious

problems. *Pravda* sadly enumerates the more indiscreet of them:

> Were Christ and His apostles Mensheviks or Bolsheviks? Were they not persecuted by the Government and by the clergy? Can Communism become the object of a religious faith? Is it possible, generally speaking, to live without faith? Should the children be brought up in the Christian religion where the mother alone remains in that faith?

Such questions as these reveal a singular desire to reconcile the new doctrine with the beliefs handed down. It even happens (*Pravda* is still our authority) that full-fledged Communists get married in church, have their children baptized secretly, and make Easter cakes with the Soviet pentagram on them, in place of the cross.

The truth is that the Church, in spite of the ignorance of its clergy, had an answer to all the spiritual needs of the masses. It was able to supply a practical rule of life for the peasants who, long before *The Brothers Karamazoff*, had fully understood that "if there is no God you can do as you please." In dragging down heaven to the earth can Bolshevism claim this prerogative?

An old Communist, expelled from the party by a Commission of Control for having acquired a small farm, challenged his judges: "Would you have turned me out for having a turkey?"

"No," replied the Commission.

"Nor for two?"

"No," was the reply, after a moment of hesitation.

"I should be very much obliged, then, if you would tell me the precise number of turkeys a loyal Communist would be allowed to keep."

The Commission, according to *Pravda* (August 25, 1923), was unable to solve this problem, though the existence of a whole family depended upon it. Engels, Marx, and Lenin, to tell the truth, did not condescend to deal with such petty details as these, but these details, which dominate the life of 80 per cent. of the Russian population, point the finger at the powerlessness of materialist religion to deal with the simplest material difficulties.

The canons of Communism are silent, and Lenin wears his eternal sphinx-like smile. "We have smashed religious prejudices to atoms," declares Trotsky, in his book, *Voprossy Byta* (*Moral Questions*), "and we have put nothing in the place of them. Families fight among themselves about funerals and christenings. . . . The man smashes up the icons, and his wife avenges them on the portraits of Karl Marx."

"Act first, and then we shall see." . . . This aggressive empiricism was as far as Lenin got when he condescended to notice the objections of his opponents. Like a waterspout, Bolshevism has passed over the vast expanse glorified by Pushkin, "from the cold cliffs of Finland to the burning shores of Colchis," and, like Satan at the close of a witches' Sabbath, Trotsky sees nothing but a barren desert around him. "The proletariat," he moans, in the book already quoted, "is poor in history, poor in traditions. . . . Its culture is miserable." Can this be the same Trotsky who in October 1917 hailed a Jacobin glory in the sailors who ripped up a Rembrandt to make socks for their boots, all stained with mud and with blood? Is it the

same Trotsky who encouraged the workers to blow up Petrograd in order to build the "Holy Commune" on the imperial ruins?

In those heroic days the proletariat claimed a real creative power; the Revolution promised to bring a new world to birth, between night and morning. Decrees were rushed out with a fantastic confidence in their immediate realization. It was the same lack of foresight, foolhardiness, and showy self-confidence which has always compromised Russian offensives. Trotsky, after some hare-brained experiments, resigned himself to a recognition that "morals and psychology are terribly conservative." And Trotsky is not alone in recognizing this collapse. "We are weary, we are weary," *Pravda* confessed, as long ago as October 12, 1924. "We are the last survivors of our caste, and we have not long to live," mourned Comrade Shershenevitch, in a Soviet elegy. The most convinced Bolsheviks display this mortal lassitude, this incurable disillusionment. Some, like Kuznezoff, Joffe, and Lukovitnoff, unable to survive the loss of their dreams, have sought forgetfulness in suicide.

Chapter Four

FANATICS—RED AND WHITE

IT is not difficult to understand this disillusionment and disgust. "The whole of Russia," the Soviet newspapers confess, "flounders among savage prejudices and barbarous superstitions." Russia does not believe only in the devil; more than ever she believes also in God, and in a manner that has gradually compelled an atheistic authority to regret the loss of the Holy Synod with its doctrinal police.

Country of St Sergius, whose laura[1] has become the sanctuary of an enlightened faith, Russia is also the cradle of the Klikushi, those incredible visionaries of the street corner and hierophants of the underworld, idiots and geniuses, sorcerers and devotees, blasphemers and prophets. Self-tortured under their sordid rags, these play-actors of the Church, religious freaks, have covered Muscovite history with their prayers and imprecations. The emperors have kissed their hands and scourged them in turn. St Basil, who spat in the face of Ivan the Terrible, was, after all, only a canonized Klikusha. In the first half of the seventeenth century another Klikusha, Tereshka, terrorized the Patriarch himself. Whenever a general calamity overwhelmed Russia the Klikushi appeared from the Muscovite alleys to infect the crowd with their delirium. Even Peter

[1] Monastery.—TRANSLATOR.

the Great wore himself out in the struggle against this eminently national form of epilepsy. It is the same with Bolshevism. Has it not, indeed, revived from 'the stormy days' the most suitable conditions for the multiplication of fanatics? Convicts in the seat of authority, Byzantine quarrels among the clergy, a *danse macabre* of cholera and leprosy with human flesh sold in the market-place, and, above all, the haunting power of the supernatural, with a dense swarming of impostors, ghosts, and fortune-tellers, the mass-hysteria of a nation at grips with the Beast of the Apocalypse! The Moscow Press raises its voice against the "Return to Medievalism," "Impenetrable Darkness," "Victory of the Priests"—terms which indicate the extent of its uneasiness. It is fretted by the 'obscurantism' of a people which, called by Destiny to Bolshevize the world, confuses Communism with the reign of Antichrist! The Socialist Republic is furrowed with pilgrimages, the population returning to the nomadic state to run after miracles. St Mary has appeared in Podolia and ordered the peasants to plant expiatory crosses; the news spreads over the whole region, and for 300 miles processions of fanatics make toward this valley of Jehosophat.

In the neighbourhood of Kieff, where Vladimir's warriors drowned their idols, the icons are reported to have shed tears; blood is distilled from corpses in the villages of Volhynia; near Poltava the branches are secreting holy water; and the Divine Face of the Saviour is seen reflected in a stream at Saltykoffo. Around these improvised shrines large crowds camp in the open air, nailing holy images to the trunks of the

trees, turning the forests into tabernacles, and exhausting themselves with canticles and prayers. Too often, to the great satisfaction of the Soviets, charlatans endeavour to extort money from the devotees; bushels of wheat and quarters of meat daily enrich thousands of village Rasputins. Then the authorities intervene in the name of the law and of outraged Science; there are scuffles and bloodshed, but the people remain attached to the Klikushi, rotten or theatrical though they be, provided that they will offer to open the heavens and anathematize the hated *régime*, bring back to life the Tsar, the Tsarina, and the Tsarevitch. Bolshevik philosophy finds itself compelled to set its police on the track of 'false Dimitrii.' Was it not sufficient to set the whole of the province of Penza in a turmoil when a neurasthenic governess, Claudine Polikarpovitch, proclaimed herself the Empress Alexandra, and a travelling showman, Sacha Trudenkoff, posed as the Grand Duke Alexis?

Such is the thirst for miracle that Science itself, usually regarded as an emanation from the nether regions, sometimes swells the number of saints and pilgrimage-places. A Bolshevik savant recently discovered a mammoth's tooth in the neighbourhood of a village in Volhynia. He buried his treasure, and, to mark the spot, he planted a stake with the inscription: "Here lies the tooth of a mammoth." Returning at the head of an academic commission, the Red palæontologist nearly fainted. . . . An immense crowd was singing hymns before the stake, on which had been piled a vast number of icons, while the pilgrims were drawing

water by the pailful from a neighbouring stream. " St Mammoth's water," the peasants called it, a guaranteed cure for violent toothache and for tetanus.

Before this groundswell, continually increased by the sea of popular sentiment, the Bolshevik State is bound to beat a retreat. 'Historic materialism' is forced into rivalry with the Church by an imitation of the very 'prejudices' against which it is fighting, for the peasant cares as little to-day for the Communist catechism as he did yesterday for the subtleties of orthodox theology. What he wants, now as then, are icons, liturgies, pilgrimages, sacraments—a cult, not a theology. So atheism exploits the most profound mysticism in the interests of the Revolution. St Lenin is better than St Nicholas, or, in the last resort, a Diptych, joining St Nicholas to St Lenin! According to Bukharin, this is not uncommon in the villages.

Thus we find the Soviets transforming themselves into vendors of Red fetishes and Communist-blessed medals. Every school, every factory, every club, every administrative office has to-day, according to *Pravda* of April 3, 1925, its " Leninist Corner," which is strangely like a chapel. The smooth head of the Master adorns to-day the place previously reserved for holy images, and there is no lack of flowers and lamps. Sometimes the Asiatic idol is placed on an improvised iconostasis. The degree of loyalty may be measured by the number of candles or the quality of the red velvet on the Altar of Repose. Some factories, according to *Pravda*, squander as much as 2000 roubles on crimson material for this purpose.

To the candles and the flowers must be added the litanies. A continual incense-smoke of words bathes the effigy of a man who always professed the most complete contempt for phrase-making—even Communist phrase-making—and for some time there have been veritable Communist breviaries turned out for the faithful. The Gosizdat, or State publishing house, published a collection of psalms in 1925, with black edges, relieved by scarlet tear-drops. We find historic materialism expressing itself in the style of St Teresa, with the sacred heart of Lenin consumed by the flames of a cosmic ardour! This movement stops at nothing in the way of plagiarism. Soviet baptisms (*Sovkrestiny*) take the place of Christian baptisms; a workers' society acts as godfather, and the local atheist 'cell' dedicates the newborn infant to his revolutionary mission in a diploma signed in red ink: "We do not bless thee in the name of the Cross, that symbol of ignorance and of servitude, but in the name of the red flag of the International, the standard of labour and struggle." Thousands of small boys are thrown out upon life strengthened with this viaticum, under the names of Lenin, Budenny, Marx, Marat, Troud (Labour), Kim (the initials of the International of Communist Youth), Proffsoyus (the professional unions), Rem (standing for the sacred terms, Revolution, Electrification, Peace), Vtzik (Central Executive Committee), Sovnarkom (Soviet of the Commissars), Ikki (Executive Committee of the Third International). The little girls enjoy equally eclectic names, such as Revolution, Federation, Commune, Octobrine, Volga, Ninel (Lenin written backward).

Sometimes popular imagination turns away from history and geography and the bureaucracy and turns to the field of zoology. Thus, according to *Pravda*, one workman solemnly bestowed on his son the name of Crocodile.

In this flat and servile fashion does Communism ape its class enemies and manufacture 'religious opium' wholesale. At the very time that it is installing a 'cultural museum' in the laura of Petchora and a picture-gallery in St Isaac's Cathedral it adds a new sanctuary to the mausoleum of Lenin at the Leninist Institute. Russia will soon have her "Revolutionary Pantheon," a really scientific temple, which, according to its founders, will have nothing in common with the "*bourgeois* Pantheon" in Paris. There will be no sarcophagi, but a series of crystal urns in which the brains of the great Bolshevik leaders will be preserved in spirit, a set of phrenological charts, with photographic enlargements of the convolutions of the brain, and popular explanations of the genius of these chiefs in terms of the weight and structure of the grey matter. Before this parade of anatomical preparations it will indeed be possible to claim that the whole of Marxism has been condensed into a glass jar. A few kilograms of green, spongy flesh will contain the germ of the "October victories," the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Third International, and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics!

Bolshevism, however, is not limited to the religious field in borrowing its rites and customs. To combat the Church it has had recourse to the deformations of the Church itself. After having shot the Klikushi out of

hand, it is to these same Klikushi that historic materialism proposes an alliance. A doctrine founded on the natural sciences fastens itself on to the fortune-tellers and mountebanks. The eternal Russian Klikusha!

The Dukhobors and Baptists return from their exile in the United States; the Old Believers increase the number of their parishes; the Skoptzy renew their practices of self-mutilation; the Beguny return to their Dionysiac dances; the Khlysty reinstall the 'sacred courtesans' in their chapels; fanatics bury themselves alive or throw themselves with bursting eyes into the flames. In Volhynia a certain Kornez has resurrected a sect of the time of Peter the Great which taught that death by fire was the only way to save the soul. One of the adepts, in order to open the gates of heaven, cut the throats of his three children, after a month of prayer and fasting, and then, attired in a clean shirt, set fire to his house and retired to the woods to thank God for this holy inspiration![1]

Ancient and forgotten demons from which the peasants appeared to have been finally delivered have let themselves loose on Russia like the Gadarene swine. The Dyrniki (from the word *dyra*, meaning 'hole') live, as their name suggests, in the natural cavities of the wild forests that abound in the departments of Volgoda and Viatka. They hold that the world is about to disappear, and that all work and all effort are therefore so many insults to the Deity. At sunrise the Dyrniki come out of their haunts to perform their devotions with their faces toward the East. Living like the beasts of the

[1] *Izvestia*, May 4, 1925.

field, they share with them a complete shamelessness. Sometimes they build shanties of clay, but always with holes to serve as doors and without windows, which their creed condemns as a heresy. The Dyrniki are the ants of Christendom!

In the North the Triassuny, or Shakers, have made their appearance again. Their prayers take the form of squatting round one of their prophets, grimacing and emitting strange inarticulate noises. The murmur grows to the accompaniment of increasingly hideous grimaces. Suddenly a *triassun*, man or woman, will go down on all-fours, and the others follow suit. There is a wriggling of backs, and the whole scene resembles a sort of perambulating ant-hill, emitting a raucous burr of sound. For hours, with faces glued to the ground, fifty of these strange worshippers will thus mingle their groanings and sweatings, until one of them breaks away from the breathless crowd and commences to tremble in all his limbs. This is the signal for a collective dementia. A cry, as of animals in pain, goes up from the depths of the participants, who catch the contagion and begin to tremble with ever-increasing intensity, as though muscles and nerves had become detached from their motor centres and been delivered into the power of a cyclone. Some end by barking like dogs, foaming at the mouth, with tongues hanging out. Others, exhausted, bite the earth, tear off their clothes, and dig their nails deep into their own flesh. Then, as rapidly as it began, this violence ceases, and gives place to a condition of coma. The *triassuny* sink into a brutish sleep, men and women, half naked, mingling in a sordid human jelly.

When they awake all are persuaded that they have experienced a visitation of the Holy Spirit, for God, so they argue, manifests Himself only in language that cannot be understood of men.

The cruelty-lust of Leninism has exploited all these forms of hysteria with the same cynical lack of ceremony with which it has urged the populace on to the assault of democracy, made use of convicts to disperse the Constituent Assembly, and of street-porters to overcome the universities. It has even succeeded in mobilizing the Klikushi in its service, among misguided monks and debauched priests. Like Tsarism, it has found its allies in the Orthodox underworld. In strange 'monastic communes' deaconesses cross themselves in the name of Labour, the Father, the Workman, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of popular indignation against the sin of society. A mysterious confraternity announces the creation of a "Religious Third International" (*tretyl interreligial*), the union of the Church with the Komintern, the canonization of Marx, Liebknecht, and Darwin, while for the offices of the Church is substituted "the cult of the psychic centre on the basis of the evolution of species." As usually happens in 'Bolshevik strategy,' miracle-workers and police spies, apostles and *agents provocateurs*, are mingled in a disgusting promiscuity. The Red Ochrana throws itself into dogmatic conflicts, adjudicates on schisms, presides over the sectarian saturnalia, the famous *radénii* in which mysticism expresses itself in wild orgies to the accompaniment of pig-like grunts. Bishop Antonin, unfrocked under the old *régime* for moral turpitude, sets up a new ecclesiastical

organization under the title of " the Renaissance of the Church," Bishop Ioaniky founds " the Free Church of the Workers," which reduces the Gospel to a crude outline of Marx's *Das Kapital.* The priest Belkoff, a base creature of Rasputin, founds a " Union of Religious Workers," and another priest, Vedensky, a soured adventurer, preaches the right of the parochial Soviets to elect the curates. Finally, the celebrated Krasnitzky, an ex-member of the ultra-monarchist " black hundred," a veritable purveyor to the Cheka, to whose betrayal the Metropolitan Veniamin owed his sufferings, sets up in the place of the Patriarchate the revolutionary buffooneries of his " Living Church."

Chapter Five

THE BREST-LITOVSK OF ATHEISM

ONLY one step remained to demonstrate the powerlessness of Marxian materialism to govern the peasant without the assistance of a Church, and it has been taken, with an eye on the sad lessons of history. Too weak to break up the altars, capable at most of profaning them, scientific atheism has undertaken their nationalization, to its own profit. Much against their will the Soviets have had to resign themselves to the distressing anomaly of a Church of their own—a tame Church, like that of the Tsars, with the synod as a police force, and 'procurers' charged with the duty of catching bishops. For the second time in Russia the State has guillotined the Church. The Patriarchate, revived in 1917, survived barely five years. It is an institution essentially incompatible with a political despotism, whether the despots be emperors or the Soviets.

Secularized, reduced to the rank of "Citizen Betiavin," and worn out by illness and imprisonment, the Patriarch Tikhon was the only obstacle, in the eyes of the Kremlin, to the absorption of the Church by the temporal power. So pure was his life, so compelling his prestige, even when he exercised it from within a monastery of which his persecutors had made a prison and were later to make a tomb, that the Soviets would not have dared to bring this noble old man before the

bar of revolutionary 'justice,' if they had not first deprived him of his functions with the assistance of a comic-opera council. This time the henchmen of the Cheka carried out their work in cassocks, under the shadow of a usurped Cross. The "Superior Ecclesiastical Administration" sprang up in a night—a new Holy Synod enshrining a mosaic of all the principal heresies. The "Living Church," invited to place itself at the head of the movement, was not proof against this temptation of Satan. In return for conceding a share of its authority to the Leninist State it received gifts of livings and endowments. The excommunication of Tikhon sealed the alliance between this sect and the Kremlin.

Never, not even when Rasputin was able to nominate bishops, had the ecclesiastical bureaucracy sunk so low. "Every believer," thundered the Council, "should be a loyal citizen of Soviet Russia. Every citizen ought to assist the Government to the utmost of his power in bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth." Vedensky declared in his feverish zeal that "the sun of social truth has lightened the world since October 1917." The Council transformed heresy into orthodoxy and a dissident clergy into an official clergy. With the same unctuous voices that had previously invoked the blessing of Heaven on the "most pious and autocratic Emperor" the priests of the "Living Church" now chanted in front of their icons the amazing prayer: "Long life to the pious Government of the U.S.S.R., which watches over the destinies of the people on the foundations of labour and the general well-being."

The success appeared complete. In destroying the Patriarch, Bolshevism, by the hand of the Council, made an end of the Patriarchate; in ridding itself of a man it wiped out an institution. The experiments of Peter the Great, however, were not to be repeated. It was all very well for Krasnitzky to order the arrest of the Archbishop Agaphanyel, whom Tikhon had nominated as "Guardian of the Patriarchal Throne"; the idea of a spiritual sovereignty, of a power not of this world and not to be overcome by this world, had its roots too deep in the masses of the people. "We have no longer a Tsar, a little Father that we could love, so we must have a Patriarch." So argued the peasant delegates at the 1917 Council, assembled amid the shots of the rising; a council that brought the Patriarchate out of the tomb in which it had slept for two centuries.

Soon there was nothing left of the Bolshevik alliance but a desiccated Senate, acting merely as a recorder of the decisions of the Communist State. At the end of a few months the "Living Church" was recognized as having been stillborn. Everything which separated it from Tikhon's Church—even the very reforms which appeared to give it a sort of *raison d'être*—served only to hasten its downfall. The destruction of the books in old Slavonic, the deformation of the liturgy, the closing of the convents, the right of second marriage accorded to the priests, the selection of bishops from the married clergy, the recognition of the Soviet claims to ecclesiastical buildings, the admission of women to the ranks of the priesthood, the scandalous creation of deaconesses, dressed in scarlet copes; above all, the abandonment

of the iconostases, the abolition of the Holy of Holies —all these innovations were so many acts of sacrilege. Far less would have been needed to create the certainty that the Apocalyptic age was at hand and the Church of Antichrist had been set up.

The Bishop of Odessa, Effdokim, summoned in haste to Moscow, vainly tried to save something from the wreck of the new organization. After a solemn service at the Basilica of the Saviour he proclaimed that it was the duty of all the faithful to rally round the Synod. The people, however, cried out in a loud voice for a Patriarch. There was fighting round the Basilica, and a Socialist capital saw the scenes of Byzantium re-enacted. There were wild incidents. Krasnitzky made his apologies in public. The Archbishop Nicolas—another of the products of the " Living Church "—accused the Synod of grovelling at the feet of the Ogpu. The majority of the bishops followed these two examples and refused to govern their dioceses without the benediction of the Patriarch. We search in vain, even in the history of the Byzantine decadence, for a parallel situation—a Synod without a Church.

The Soviets, however, did not accept defeat. Their next step was most unexpected—a promise to Tikhon that his life should be spared in return for a public recantation. Did the Patriarch really accept this condition in the hope of rescuing the Church from chaos? All the evidence goes to suggest that, without being the author of the document which was issued in his name, Tikhon let his gaolers have their way, and events justified his policy. At the price of an apparent capitulation,

by which the great majority of the faithful were never deceived, the Patriarch succeeded in sweeping away the last vestiges of the schism. Crowds besieged the churches where he officiated, and scrambled over one another under the windows to receive his blessing. Seeing his prestige increase from day to day, the Ogpu substituted the druggist for the executioner and a potion for the cartridge. It was a discreet liquidation of a stormy propaganda: the Patriarch, it was announced, had died acknowledging that the power of the Soviets was from God and recommending the Orthodox to accept it loyally. Another legend, with a new apotheosis to follow it up. 800,000 men prostrated themselves before the coffin in which the Soviets believed they had now, once for all, buried the Patriarchate.

The offensive was renewed on the religious front. The first step was to prohibit the summoning of the Council, the Sobor, to elect a legitimate successor to Tikhon; the next the systematic elimination of all the prelates whose rank qualified them "to hold the vacant seat of the Patriarchal Dignity." One after another the Metropolitan Peter Krutizky, the Metropolitan Sergius of Novgorod, the Metropolitan Joseph, the Archbishops of Ekaterinburg, Astrakhan, and Uglitch, went into the nationalized monasteries taken over by the Cheka. In 1928, in the concentration camp at Soloffki alone, more than 400 ecclesiastics were languishing, condemned to the most degrading tasks, like cleaning out latrines, or the most exhausting, such as carrying blocks of stone in the rigours of winter, or draining marshes in a torrid heat. Let a priest as much as make the Sign of the

Cross and a crack of the whip would recall him to his duties.

Among the most unyielding opponents of the Soviets was the heroic figure of the Metropolitan Sergius of Novgorod. Everything in the history of this prince of the Church seemed to rule out in advance any idea of compromise. Even in Russia it seemed an impossibility. Hence, when *Izvestia* published on August 19, 1927, a long manifesto by the Metropolitan Sergius, exhorting the faithful to recognize the U.S.S.R. as their "Civil Fatherland," and ordering the priests to behave loyally toward a power that existed by the grace of God, the first thought was naturally that here was another 'scrap of paper' like the one attributed to Tikhon. It became necessary to accept the evidence, however: the Orthodox Church had renewed a famous historical incident. This time the Church had 'gone to Canossa.' It had lighted a penitential candle on the threshold of the Executive Committee.

True, the Soviets had done the same. If the Church accorded *de jure* recognition to an atheist Government, historic materialism rendered a corresponding act of politeness to the Church. It authorized a "Patriarchal Holy Synod" in association with the Metropolitan Sergius. Orthodoxy, after ten years of tribulation, had obtained a directing organ, conforming to the requirements of Canon Law and accepted within the framework of the Civil State. This was a concession of the very first importance, carrying with it the definite collapse of the rival institution, that "Synod of Innovators" which still survived the wreck of the "Living Church." The

concordat was based, therefore, on a double capitulation. Church and Soviets alike practised the method of the 'Leninist Truce.' On the one side there was the lassitude born of a long martyrdom and the need to recuperate exhausted forces, on the other the inability to govern a Christian people contrary to Christianity and the search for temporary auxiliaries in the Church, in any Church that could be found. And, finally, both sides feared the same danger; Orthodoxy and Atheism joined hands against a common foe—the Klikusha.

The punishment of Bolshevism has fitted the crime. In the first Socialist Republic the different sects number no less than seventeen million adherents, whereas, under the old *régime*, their numbers never exceeded a million and a half. Comrade Iaroslavsky, on January 28, 1928, presented a report to the Political Bureau, dealing with this unmanageable revival of mysticism. "Of all our enemies," he said, "these sectaries are the most difficult to deal with; most of them have borrowed their structure and organization from the Communist Party; they have branches, sections, cells, leagues of youth, women's clubs. . . ."

Innumerable examples go to prove the truth of this complaint. Most of the cases dealt with by the war councils are those of refusal to bear arms on grounds of religious conviction.[1] Russian fanaticism, at a white heat of emotion, defies the law and the police. When the Bolshevik militia endeavoured to take away from the Chamans the noisy instruments which they rattled in front of their altars a hurricane of anger was let

[1] *Krasnaya Gazeta*, Nos. 69, 73, 96, 202, and 213, of 1927.

loose, which extended even to the local garrisons; battles raged fiercely in the whole of the trans-Baikal region, and ended in the victory of the sect. The Chamans continue to make their holy noises in the ears of the Ogpu. . . .

Sometimes the sects hide themselves in the steppes or bury themselves in the depths of the forests. To the north of the department of Tomsk settlements were discovered by chance, of which neither the fiscal authorities nor the geographers knew anything. The inhabitants refused to give their names, and said they were "Sons of God." Sometimes, too, the sects form a veritable *imperium in imperio*, a power forcing its will on the local Soviets, and snapping its fingers at the commands of the central authority. The "Old Believers," hard-working, rich, and economical, reign as masters in the lower Volga, on the Ural, and in Western Siberia. An immense number of priests, disturbed by the internal disagreements of the Church, decided to float with a current they were powerless to arrest, and thus save the remnants of the faith. While every "Old Believer" holds it as an article of faith that the Soviets are from hell, he does not regard either Tikhon's Church or the "Living Church" as any better than Communism. They are all so many Satanic innovations which block the way to salvation.

But more dangerous still are the Evangelicals and the Baptists. The former had 2500 parishes in 1928, with schools, *crèches*, libraries, co-operative societies, and dramatic, musical, artistic, and literary circles. Judging by the attacks in the Soviet Press, the Baptists

are even better equipped in these respects. Bibles, copies of the Gospels, and psalters are printed by the hundred thousand. The Komsomoltzy congregate *en masse* in the *Khristomoly* (Y.M.C.A.'s); enormous sums provided by the generosity of the United States enable the Baptists to resist the anti-religious propaganda even in Moscow.

"The fact is," cried *Pravda* on October 19, 1928, "that this propaganda is carried on without any regard to good sense; the equipment of the agitators is most mediocre and maladroit." *Bezbojnik* (No. 233) gives rein to the same pessimism. The atheistic 'cells' on the territory of the U.S.S.R. comprise about 200,000 members; the subscription is very small—five copecks per month—but for two and a half years not one of these convinced materialists has forwarded his subscription to the exchequer of the Central Committee. The enterprise for the de-Christianization of Russia is decidedly insolvent! With excusable bitterness Iaroslavsky declares that even Communist convictions are expressed in religious forms. The peasants cross themselves devoutly before the mausoleum of Lenin, and pray that "Ilitch" may enjoy all happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

When atheism wins the people to the cult of the Master the people celebrate Mass on the altars of Antichrist!

Chapter Six

THE WAR AGAINST BRAINS

THE same motives which impelled the Bolshevik philosophy to declare war on religion have caused it to issue writs against science and against the savants. The paradox here is more apparent than real. Essentially a class philosophy, Marxist materialism has rushed blindly, head down, to the assault on all systems which proclaim or which search for truth in the interest of humanity and not exclusively of the proletariat. From this point of view science appears to be fundamentally just as counter-revolutionary as religion. "Do you imagine that there is a Communist geometry?" Professor Karsavin was once moved to demand of the wild men who, whip in hand, were engaged in Bolshevizing education. He received his reply in this profession of faith in *Pravda*, which defined better than a volume of argument could do the mentality of this mob theocracy: "The peasant East has overthrown the theories of Western science; it has compelled the savant to bow his head before the toil-worn worker. Since October 1917 Red Russia has maintained a thesis without parallel in the history of the world." And on the eve of the Tolstoy celebrations, on September 11, 1928, the same journal excelled itself on this theme by declaring that "if he were living to-day Tolstoy might have become the pupil of our peasants and workmen." Thus

the superiority of the labourer, who is a member of the Third International, applies indifferently to the sphere of muscular effort or to that of the grey matter of the brain. It is a comprehensive and universal superiority, determined by the transcendental nature of the chosen class. It was perfectly logical, therefore, of the Soviets to constitute tailors' apprentices members of their first academic councils. They are entirely loyal to their doctrine, again, when they persecute the intellectuals. "We have never failed to recognize," writes *Pravda*, "how profoundly hypocritical are the principles of 'pure science'; we know that the devotees of this 'pure science' prefer reaction to progress." "In every intellectual," cried Zinovieff, "I see the sworn enemy of the Soviet power." But why multiply quotations when a long record of martyrdom tells its own story?

A homicidal philosophy has yielded a harvest of blood. Historical materialism shot Professors Astroff, Volkoff, Gariacheff, Onskoff, Jukoff, and Florinsky; it starved to death Bishop Anastasius, rector of the Ecclesiastical Academy, and Professor Kotzvieffsky, Lange, and Mogulsky. As for arrests and deportations, they cannot be counted. For fear of upsetting foreign opinion at the time when its agents were pleading for *de jure* recognition the Moscow Government substituted mass-expulsions for the more radical method of 'physical suppression.' Professors, writers, philosophers, savants, lawyers, and engineers were conducted to the frontier by hundreds on a charge of nursing "an ideology hostile to the Soviet power" and "exercising, by virtue of

their scientific or literary authority, a harmful influence on the mind of the population." Such luminaries as Professors Karsavin, Lapchin, Lossky, Sorokin, Kissevetter, Berdiaeff, Babkin, Floroffsky, Kasterin, Khranevitch, Trefilieff, Mumokin, Kryloff, Machailoff, Alexandroff, Piessetzky, Sobol, Dobrovolsky, Efremoff, Korchak-Chepurkoffsky, etc., have been placed outside the pale in Russia. When Maxim Gorky, alarmed at this depopulation, ventured on a feeble expostulation the President of the Third International replied sharply: "The misfortune of our poor Gorky, so full of talent, but so brimming over with meekness, is that, coming from the gutter, he feels bound to bow to any professor."

It is always the argument of the baton, the only one at the disposal of a State philosophy. 'Free thought' under its reign is incompatible with the liberty to think. This war against brains may take on different forms, according to the political necessities of the moment, but whether it expresses itself in sharp explosions or settles down into a systematic war of extermination it remains an inseparable part of the system. Brains, after all, are a part of the national wealth, so why should they not be an object of nationalization?

Cynical, as always, Lenin, who acted very thoroughly on the maxim, *Pecunia non olet*, hastened on the very morrow of his *coup d'état*, in the spirit of a revolutionary counter-jumper, to bargain for a lease on the kingdom of the mind on behalf of the triumphant proletariat. It was the lamentable mistake of a mind misled by a period of exile. Lenin, who had brought himself to look upon Russia as a dream come true, made the same mistake

about the intellectuals as he did about the eternal fermentation of peasant mysticism. While hunger or ambition may have pushed a certain number of the weak-kneed and the opportunists to become the lackeys of Communism, the majority of the intellectuals repudiated with disgust a transaction which would have degraded them to the position of tame specialists. Mind was as little disposed to do the bidding of the revolution as it had been to submit itself to the imperial *régime*. It preferred independence, with physical privation, to a moral abdication at the bidding of ill-educated vandals. In science, as in religion, Bolshevism has had to find its supporters among the charlatans and the adventurers. In Professors Oldenburg, Scherbatoff, Pinkevitch, Ossadedchy, and Fersman, in the Krasnitzkys, the Vedenskys, the Ioanskys, and the Belkoffs, science has found what may be termed doctrinal civil servants. Whenever they touch spiritual values the Soviets degrade them to the level of their own nature, the level of the policeman and the bureaucrat; they make them a mere appendage to a general detective force, issuing summonses against thought. The only language tolerated in the intellectual is the base toadyism of the parasite.

At an open meeting of the Academy an Oldenburg deplores, in the disappearance of Lenin, " an irreparable loss to science," and, in open council, a Vedensky can bring himself to declare that " since October 1917 political truth has made its home in Russia." " I feel that henceforth Christ is with us," cries the Marxian prelate, and the Red academician, on his side, makes no bones about offering the Cheka a doctorate *honoris causa*.

Both have sold their souls to the devil, and both have disciples. The Academy of Sciences has gone so far as to double the number of professorial chairs and to welcome the candidature of 'savants' like Bukharin and Kubycheff! In a country where science and revolution are intermingled the practice of Marxism becomes naturally a claim to academic distinction, just as the least criticism of the system entails a scientific setback. One does not become an Academician in Russia unless one is willing to become a maid-of-all-work to the Communist Party.

Just as the Synod was created to keep the Church in order, so the Cheka has set up a Holy Office to control science, but under the amiable title of the Kubu, or "Commission for the Amelioration of the Conditions of Existence of the Savants." Divided into five categories according to their merits, the 'duly qualified' men of science—*i.e.*, the converts to historic materialism—receive salaries ranging from the pay of a labourer to that of a foreman, from fifty to seventy-five roubles per month—a famine ration substituted for the Petrovian Chiny.[1] These are the favoured ones. The others dress themselves in sacking and work by the light of the street lamps.

But even when he has made his submission to the system the intellectual remains an enemy; sooner or later he will wear himself out in contact with barbarism. Sometimes, like Kutler, who had been a member of the staff at the Finance Ministry under the old *régime*, he will be crushed, without any need to call in the hangman,

[1] Speech by Pozern at the Soviet Congress (*Izvestia*, November 17, 1928).

simply because an intellectual cannot adapt himself to the conditions of Communist life. There is a great educational value in the fate of that high official, one of the greatest economists Russia has produced. The old man was dying slowly in one of the prisons of Moscow, when the New Economic Policy set the Soviets looking round for financial specialists. "The enemy of the People" found himself suddenly nominated a Director of the State Bank. He set about the restoration of the gold standard with a degree of success which won the reluctant admiration of the vandals around him. But what matter! M. Kutler occupied two rooms, one of which was his library. This *bourgeois* was occupying sixteen metres too much of 'habitable surface.' The Housing Committee served him brutally with an order to get rid of his books, his sole possessions, in order to make room for the accommodation of proletarians. M. Kutler read the notice and fell in an apoplectic fit. The essence of the plebeian dictatorship, with its hatred of brains and hatred of books, is in that sad little news item.

This did not prevent the workers from walking in procession behind his coffin, with a crown tied in red ribbons and inscribed in gold letters: "The Proletariat will not forget you!" They would have done well to replace this *cliché* with the words attributed to M. Kutler himself: "40 per cent. of the population will have disappeared before the reign of absurdity ends in Russia."

Meanwhile it goes on.

Lunacharsky, Grand Master of the Soviet University, once declared:

> We are able to demand that the intellectuals shall endow our system with all the technical knowledge and the experience that they have gained at the expense of the people. The Russian intelligence, soft and shapeless, is like a woman, it yields only to force.

The "University Pugachoff" is careful not to follow an illustrious exemplar by saying that the Revolution has no need of chemists. He cherishes the infinitely more dangerous conception that the only chemistry allowed should be a revolutionary chemistry. If the Jacobins decapitated Lavoisier, the "University Pugachoff," in the name of science, of *his* science, is ready to guillotine the chemists and their chemistry with them. After a vain effort to lease the *bourgeois* brains materialism delivers itself up to-day to its ultimate struggle: it fashions human knowledge in its own image, and deforms the intellect for the greater glory of the Third International.

It is the last stage of a mystical sadism: Bolshevik philosophy 'punches the head' of science. Any department that is suspected of compromising the official materialism is held to be counter-revolutionary and is treated like the recalcitrant intellectuals: if it cannot be shot it is deported. By a stroke of the pen Bolshevism has struck the humanities out of the curricula, it has turned out of doors the juridical, historical, moral, and political sciences—philosophy, psychology, logic, and philology.[1] Communist youth must trample this reactionary trash under its feet. The inheritances of the capitalist past, the '*bourgeois*' literatures of Greece and Rome, and,

[1] *Izvestia*, April 8 and 17, 1924.

above all, the slightest traces of spiritual idealism, can only becloud the 'proletarian consciousness.' The methods applied by Comrade Pokroffsky to the training of Red professors are to-day extended to the whole of the university. There have been Faculties of Letters on the territory of the Soviet Republics. If, sometimes, history and literature are admitted in the seminaries of 100-per-cent. Leninism it is only as auxiliaries, and they are pariahs. They are the servants of materialism—or they are not. The Slav language, mother of modern Russia, is ostracized as a dangerous survival of the Tsarist Church. Lunacharsky undertook personally the composition of a manual of literature, approached "from the angle of pure Marxism." A Swedish professor, Karlgren, reports that students have pushed loyalty to the point of boycotting Shakespeare, since, to their profound disappointment, they were unable to discover in *Hamlet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* even the slightest and most passing allusion to Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*!

Experiences of this kind are, however, made infrequent by the institution of two veritable Chekas in science and literature—the Glavnauka for science, and the Glavnopolitprosvet for letters—which exercise a Draconian censorship on the manuals and the curricula. A natural corollary of the war on ideas is an implacable persecution even of words that may be regarded as counter-revolutionary. The word 'icon' in a dictionary is replaced by 'idol.' A fierce stroke of the blue pencil deletes the adjective 'rich,' since "there are no rich people in the Soviet Republic." The word 'paradise'

meets the same fate: paradise exists only under the auspices of Communism. The examples selected to illustrate lessons in syntax have to help in developing the 'citizenship' of 'young Red pioneers.' The censor would have none of the demon's promise to Tamara in Lermontoff's poem: "You shall be Queen of all the world." It was too obviously calculated to encourage monarchist propaganda! Another indignant erasure disposes of the ancient proverb: "Running is of no use; the thing is to start in time." Such an aphorism might justify the most dismal reactions.

The organized 'class-conscious proletariat' must have its vocabulary purged carefully of all *bourgeois* residue, and it follows *a fortiori* that it must limit its reading to works in harmony with the spirit of historical materialism. Since January 1, 1924, the darkness has been complete, the "University Pugachoff" having sounded a general curfew. Foaming at the lips, he has thrown himself into the assault on literature. He has torn to shreds the masterpieces, and made a holocaust of prophets, philosophers, and poets. Under the threat of exemplary penalties, Madame Krupskaya, president of the Glavnopolitprosvet, condemned to the flames, from among the books in the public libraries of the Federation, not only the Gospels, the Bible, and theological treatises, not only even the works of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Spencer, Nietzsche, etc., but such glories of the national literature as Dostoieffsky's *The Possessed* and *The Idiot*, Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and *Rudine*, Goncheroff's *Oblomoff*, and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection*.

The materialist contagion thus remains without any antidotes.

Another piece of machinery has to be added to the Glavnauka and the Glavnopolitprosvet, in the shape of the Glavrepertkom, or Central Committee for the Supervision of Programmes. This enjoys the same dictatorial powers as the other two, and is also under the control of Madame Krupskaya, who has the assistance in this matter of Lunacharsky, People's Commissary and unsuccessful playwright. In a single order these two fanatics issued the following condemnations: *Lohengrin* must be permanently banished from programmes as "a mystical work, inspired by ideas hostile to the proletariat"; *Werther* cannot be permitted, since the Werther psychology is out of date in a revolutionary age; *Marie Stuart* must be banned "on account of its monarchical and religious character"; in *Eugene Oneguine* the scene in the first act, showing a landowner surrounded by his peasants, must be deleted as "an idyll of servitude, inadmissible under the Soviet *régime*."

The sceptical reader should consult the *Krasnaya Gazeta* of September 26, 1925. Let him consult also the circulars of Lunacharsky: "The plays chosen should answer to the objects pursued by the working class; they should combat *bourgeois* prejudices and inspire the spectators with active Communist ideals." That is not all; for fear that some of the plays might be wrongly interpreted by the proletariat, the circulars recommend that "the political supervisors should furnish the necessary commentaries on a materialist

basis in the intervals." The literary and artistic ration is duly prepared in the State laboratories, stamped by the official alchemists, and distributed by the civil servants. If the Soviet Union has not exactly established State canteens where all the citizens sit down to the same proletarian menu, it has established a rigid control over the intellectual cuisine, and the distribution of mental pabulum. That is why the Revolution is so splenetic and Russia is bored to death. It is nothing but a huge school-barracks where, even during the recreation period, the scholars are expected to lisp the Red alphabet.

While she admits "a few slight errors in tactics" Madame Krupskaya is concerned to defend in detail the placing of the various works on the index, on the ground that it is necessary "to protect the interests of readers." She adopts the plea of 'Comrade' Pokroffsky that the reform of the libraries is dictated by "the reasonable propaganda of materialist conceptions." She declares, without any reservations, that "all idealistic philosophers are injurious." "The pleas of Tolstoy," she says, "are particularly dangerous on account of the exceptional talent of this writer." It is true, the Soviet Dowager concedes, that the average peasant and workman do not waste their time in studying the ebullitions of the idealists. The Glavnopolitprosvet might have allowed Plato, or even Kant, to grow mouldy on the shelves of the popular libraries without any considerable risk; these prehistoric fossils would not have been a great danger to proletarian culture. But if Madame Krupskaya's minions discover *The Critique of*

Pure Reason in the corner of a university library, as happened at Kazan, that is sufficient to secure the dismissal of the librarian.

The local sections of the 'ruling party' have drawn the natural conclusion from these interferences that any Communist organization, emanating from the Central Committee, exercises a sovereign and arbitrary power. Who will estimate the irreplaceable riches that have been thus burned by the common hangman? In January 1928 the Communist body of Tver ordered a Commission to inspect the municipal library, which comprised 5500 volumes. The Commission declared it to be 5000 too many, 500 being quite sufficient for the enlightenment of proletarian intelligence. Carts, crowded to the point of throwing a heavy strain on their axles, carried away the offending volumes, most of them sumptuously bound, gilt-edged, and bearing coats-of-arms—a *cortège* of *ci-devants*. The foreman of a neighbouring forge prepared the stake. Later it was found that among the victims were included not merely *bourgeois* authors like Pushkin, Lermontoff, Shakespeare, and Balzac, but also Karl Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Bukharin!

Chapter Seven

THE SUPREME LEVELLING

SUCH proceedings as these are unmistakable signs of a fraudulent bankruptcy. Powerless to establish any valid claim to scientific descent, historical materialism reverses the order of heredity; it Bolshevizes science, as a broken-down *bourgeois* might falsify documents. The works of Kant are destroyed as pieces of incriminating evidence. The insufficiency of these fraudulent practices to achieve the desired end soon becomes evident, however. What is the use of establishing new professorial chairs to replace the old out-of-date programmes if those who come to the lectures are still stained with capitalistic original sin? What is the use even of a Bolshevized science if distorted brains are unable to assimilate it?

The practical conclusion is obvious: *bourgeois* thought must be nipped in the bud by the concentration of university teaching exclusively in the hands of Communists. Once more the terms of the problem are reversed by Bolshevik metaphysics. In order to justify the divine gift of revelation which it attributes to the proletariat, it confers on it, by letters patent, the sole right to receive higher education. According to the new regulations, published in *Izvestia* of April 10 and 11, 1924, out of 13,600 vacancies in the universities—there had been 38,000 in 1923 and 115,000 in 1922!—

8000 places were reserved for students of the workmen's faculties and 5000 for Soviet civil servants—that is to say, for members of the Communist Party, provided they knew the first four rules of arithmetic and some rudiments of grammar. Thus there are only 600 places to be shared among the young people, about 30,000 in number, who pass year in and year out through the secondary schools and have every right to go up to the university. On the pretext of "an over-production of qualified specialists, which is dangerous to the State," thousands upon thousands of graduates have seen their careers destroyed at the bolted doors of the Alma Mater. There is no need to emphasize the hollowness of this plea. In order to contest the 4·4 per cent. of vacancies open to them the candidates are required under paragraph 2 of the new rules to produce a formal letter of recommendation from the 'cell' of their own locality testifying to proletarian descent and a Communist vaccination. The Revolution has thus reversed an absurdity which even the Ministers of Nicholas I attempted in vain: the ear-marking of higher education, like admission to the Guards, as a privilege of the nobility! A Communist republic takes in its stride a folly before which the most autocratic of monarchs recoiled!

The doors of the universities duly barred and bolted, it remained to rout out the class enemies among the students already enrolled. Every year, after a wild campaign, it is announced that "a serious development of political corruption has been discovered among the youth," and Bolshevik philosophy demands fresh heads.

The educational terror follows the classic models of the Red terror: no judges, only executioners. Under the high supervision of Comrade Iaroslavsky, controller of the Communist Party, inquisitional commissions of authorized *agents provocateurs* proceed to "clean out the university Augean stables." There is a feeble pretence of an examination, based on the best Cheka models, a minimum of apparent regard for the law—just enough to justify a capital sentence—a pedagogic farce based on the judicial comedy. After that it is the tumbrels, and tens of thousands of students are disposed of on the pretence of 'academic insufficiency.' No doubt a great many students are below the university standard; the decree of August 6, 1918, promulgated at the height of Communist militarism, opened the secondary schools to young Red dunces of sixteen. In spite of their having loaded the universities with all this ballast, however, the Communists do not forget that, in Iaroslavsky's words in *Pravda*, "Chemical analysis, however respectable it may be, can never replace work for the party." And the first essential of this "work" is to help the police by denouncing the *bourgeois*. "The Moscow bureau of Communist students," says Bukharin's journal in so many words, "take the most active part at the Chistka." Occupations on this scale are naturally sufficiently absorbing to merit a special consideration from the Third International, when the plums are being distributed. Iaroslavsky does not hesitate to say that the Commissions of Control must *naturally* take into account the social origins of the students and show a special consideration for the sons of workers and

peasants. With equally brutal frankness the Muscovite Press of 1925 announced that, out of 15,000 students examined at Petrograd, 2000 were expelled "either for academic slackness or as social enemies." Sometimes, in punishment for a 'non-proletarian origin,' students have been turned out two or three weeks before the completion of their studies!

Hundreds of young folk prefer death *sans phrase* to this intellectual death; others, more energetic, throw themselves desperately into the fighting opposition, which is simply a more heroic form of suicide. Thinking Russia, challenged in its beginnings, succumbs to the cannon-ball or wastes away in concentration camps. When it is tolerated it is only to bury itself deep in dirt and misery and in chronic want. Only the purest of the pure, the agitators and the police spies, can aspire to the honour of scholarships; the rest wear themselves out in manual labour:

> Out of 4000 students of the Petroffsky Academy, that nursery of Russian Socialism, 2500 seek shelter at night in the ruins of derelict houses, in railway waiting-rooms, or on the benches of the *boulevards*. Many students earn their living as porters. . . . The more fortunate may act as commissionaires. Secondary school pupils, for the most part, look like ragged beggars, homeless, penniless, destitute.

It is not a *bourgeois* who uses this counter-revolutionary language, but one of the leaders of Bolshevism, Bukharin himself, in his report to the 13th Congress of the Communist Party.

Since then an almost equally illustrious Bolshevik, Comrade Zalkind, has embodied these truths in the

form most affected by Bolsheviks—that of statistical columns. Two-thirds of the students in Moscow have less than twenty-one roubles per month to spend; 27 per cent. manage to live only by following the hardest manual occupations; 40 per cent. at most are decently nourished; 20 per cent. do not get food every day, and when they dine—two or three times a week—it is in the university refectories, where they regale themselves on a soup flavoured with cockroaches and decaying herrings. Housing accommodation is on the same scale as the dietary. 16 per cent. of the students have nine square metres at their disposal; 24 per cent. have as much room as if they were already curled up in their coffins; 40 per cent. sleep less than seven hours after they have devoted fifteen to work, of which five or six only have been occupied in their studies. The result of all this is that the number of students ill varies according to the schools, between 52 and 85 per cent. Tuberculosis, anæmia, and neurasthenia claim their victims.

These were the figures at the beginning of 1928: when the schools reopened in the same year *Izvestia* of September 27 declared that the situation was still worse; there were 7000 homeless students in Moscow!

An increasing impoverishment of the mind is the natural accompaniment of this physical beggary; empty heads keep pace with empty bellies. Having replaced the labourer, who now sits in the seat of authority, is it surprising if the student takes over the labourer's mentality with his task? For the overwhelming majority of the youth of the universities Bolshevik philosophy reduces itself to a dry collection of stereo-

typed formulæ similar to the tiresome 'theory' taught to the soldiers under the old *régime*; the Slovestnost, a sort of *pot-pourri* of divinity, of military legislation, and practical rules for distinguishing generals from civic dignitaries. The neophytes of Communism, whether they be intellectuals or illiterate, treat these dreary primers of historic materialism as so many penances, and, like the Tsar's troopers under the watchful eye of the sergeant, they repeat their miserable catchwords under the whip of the loutish usher. That, indeed, is all the Soviets ask of them. In successive avatars, retreating from one point to another, their philosophy has found its last refuge in a fusion with the compulsory political instruction, the Politgramota, a caricature of the old Slovestnost, which was a sort of revolutionary *vade mecum*, drawn up for Communist slaves. All the Red university demands of its new members is a sort of dialectical scaffolding to support their profession of Darwinian and Bolshevik faith. It is quite sufficient if the candidates will define religion as "an opiate for the people," the Church as "an instrument of proletarian exploitation," and idealism as "a trick of the possessing classes." An unmeasured vulgarization, an absurd simplification, all the fads of Lenin are here carried to their climax. A verbal satisfaction is sufficient for Bolshevism, which is content to turn out Marxian parrots.

Most often, however, even this modest achievement is found to be unattainable. The student fails to overcome his repugnance to these memorizing exercises demanded by the State. A certain Navjinsky admits

in *Pravda* that the young people in the schools, taken as a whole, display "a complete political ignorance." "You can count on your fingers," he adds, "the students, even among the Communists, who show any interest in the Soviet doctrines and *régime*." He quotes some examples from the replies given by young people about to obtain their diplomas as Doctors of Social Science.

There are some inexcusable blasphemies! Students gravely assert that Bakunin[1] represented the Soviets at the Genoa Conference, and that Engels[2] is the head of the Red Army. If ridicule could kill in Russia, Bolshevism would long since have followed its victims to "the Kingdom of General Dukhonin"—a polite expression for the tomb. Innumerable villages bear the name of Karl Marx, Liebknecht, and Rosa Luxemburg, but, according to Sosnoffsky, the editor of the country newspaper *Bednota*, their inhabitants would be hard put to it to explain the meaning of the fateful letters U.S.S.R. Some even confuse the most deep-dyed counter-revolutionaries, like General Denikin, with the president of the Federation, Comrade Kalinin, and there are those who are ignorant even of the names of Voroffsky, Zinovieff, and Stalin, while *Sovnarkom* and *Vitzik* might be Chinese or Hebrew for all they convey to them.

Madame Krupskaya, in her report to the 13th Congress of the Communist Party, announced:

> The entire Russian countryside is sunk in ignorance; there are districts where, among 8000 peasants, you will have diffi-

[1] Michael Bakunin, a Russian anarchist, died in 1876.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] Friedrich Engels (1820–95) was joint-author of the Communist Manifesto of 1848.—TRANSLATOR.

culty in finding a printed page; and if, by chance, a newspaper finds its way there it is hastily seized upon for making cigarettes. . . . Large districts have never seen a school inspector. . . . Books are absolutely inaccessible to the rural population. A primer is worth a pood of wheat, a manual of history three poods, a pencil ten. . . . The peasants in one village gathered together fifty poods of rye and placed it at the disposal of the schoolmaster: he was able to obtain twenty second-hand manuals with the proceeds.

Madame Krupskaya goes on:

The school is not heated, so the classrooms are closed up. Crouching over the stove in her attic, a shabbily dressed schoolmistress dictates the lessons to an appallingly dirty class of youngsters, who write with chalk on the floors. This happens in the department of Penza, one of the most flourishing in the old Russia. Since the Revolution the primary schools in the same province have not had a single little girl as a pupil.

Huge volumes might be filled with similar testimonies. "The work slips away from us," a schoolmistress writes to *Pravda*; and it is not hard to understand this demoralization, for the Communist 'cell' holds its sessions at the school, and makes a sewer of it. "The school corridor," writes another mistress, "is the only accommodation I have for myself and my sick child; I thought Socialism meant electricity, warmth, science. . . ." And *Pravda* concludes: "All the abuses, perversions, and monstrosities of the administration weigh down upon the schoolmistresses and masters."

Reading, writing, and arithmetic in the "Kingdom of the Cad" are so many affronts to the doctrine of complete equality; even the product of elementary education

ends by becoming an enemy! The two most advanced Republics in the U.S.S.R.—Russia and the Ukraine—had twenty-five million illiterates in 1928, and from year to year the *Likbez* undertakings, devoted to the reduction of illiteracy, slow down their efforts and retrench their expenditure. In thirteen departments, among the most wealthy, this regression amounted to 45 per cent.[1] According to the report of Lunacharsky at the last Congress of the Soviets, the Commissariat of Education cannot carry out a quarter of its task; the *clientèle* of the primary schools varies, according to the district, from 30 to 50 per cent. of the child population. At the lowest estimate 1400 millions[2] would be needed to repair or build schools, and equally 'astronomical' figures would be required to bring the teaching staff up to standard. The teacher—an indispensable element in this untaught theocracy—receives from the victorious proletariat 44 per cent. of his pre-War salary.

But suppose the entire Soviet Federation were duly instructed on Marxian lines, what would Russia and the world at large gain by this Bolshevization of peasant brains? Demian Bedny, the Pindar of the Muscovite underworld, whose worst demonstrations of bravado remain unpunished, has gone to the length of coining a diminutive, hitherto unknown to the official jargon. He talks of *sovduraki*, or Soviet imbeciles, a new type of idiot, the Red mental-deficient, the revolutionary *crétin*. For the *sovdurak*, Marxism, clothed in a few atheistic diatribes, and completed by the elements of demagogic

[1] *Pravda*, October 13, 1928.

[2] French francs, equivalent to nearly £12,000,000.—TRANSLATOR.

materialism, contains, even when reduced to a few parrot-like formulæ, the key to the universe and a guide to all practical problems. It represents his theology, his metaphysics, his encyclopædia, his catechism. When a *sovdurak* is able to recite by heart a few passages of *Das Kapital* this *summum* of learning gives him the right to despise all the rest of human knowledge. He will assert, without moving an eyebrow, that Eugene Oneguine, the hero of Pushkin, is a lyric poet; he will locate Sweden in North Africa, and take his oath that Donetz is in Spain, since "Don is the usual title of a Spanish citizen."[1] But he can recite the Marxian Talmud, he is a militant member of a 'cell,' so why should he not be allowed to know nothing of orthography and geography?

Now and then a tragic warning emanates from the darkness in which the genius of a great people is flickering out. A number of professors, driven to extremities, made this poignant protest at the Moscow Geological Congress: "The moral atmosphere in Russia is stifling. Russian savants feel sorely the illegal practices under which everybody suffers, and they feel that the time has come to claim for the country the elementary rights of man and of the citizen." It is the agonized cry of the shipwrecked; their S.O.S. More and more halting, the dying cry of Leonid Andréeff sounds through the night. The dying step into the place of the dead to sound the funeral knell of Russian intelligence. Ragged and starved, they rise from the sick-bed to pull the cord. Even those pensioners of the Soviets, the Marxian

[1] Bukharin's report to the 13th Congress of the Communist Party.

bureaucrats, feel a thrill of terror in face of the extent of the catastrophe.

Pravda, inadvertently, no doubt, gave publicity to the despairing prediction of four "Red professors":

> In five years, or ten at most, the principal organizations of brain-workers will disappear or be turned into pensioners' hospitals. . . . Bad pay is hastening the exhaustion. The training of the scientific staffs is extremely slow, and the rules and regulations are evaded. Considered in relation to the needs of the country, the conditions prevailing at the Institute of Red Professors are very mediocre. It is only the middle class that can supply Russia with the intellectual services she requires.

When these voices are not stifled by the Cheka they are condemned to cry in the wilderness. Bolshevism lives by feeding on human brain-stuff, and its philosophy can survive only by annihilating thought. Bastard daughter of Science, it has become at present an apish idolatry. Scourged in its unjustified pride, it has left the laboratories to succumb in the caves. Its victory spells the death of civilization. The last derelicts of the intellectual shipwreck will soon disappear in the immense wave of ignorance and fanaticism let loose on a country incapable of prolonged intellectual resistance. In the last resort the victory of historic materialism will be found to be a triumph of matter over mind, and the only sounds to break the mortal silence in which Russia will be swallowed up will be the Marxian gabblings of the *sovduraki* or the mad incantations of the Klikushi:

> For all the slaves must be equal in their slavery. Science and talent are the luxuries of the higher minds. Cicero's tongue shall be rooted out, the eyes of Copernicus shall be closed,

Shakespeare shall be stoned. Away with learning, away with science: obedience is all that is needed. The thirst for knowledge is an aristocrat's thirst. Gratify it, and the family, love, and private property will follow in its train. We will stifle longing, we will encourage drunkenness and spying, we will let loose an appalling debauchery, we will kill genius in the womb. Everything shall be reduced to a common denominator. Only the indispensable is necessary—that shall be the universal watchword.

Thus did Dostoieffsky, fifty-eight years ago, represent a Russia delivered up to revolutionary maniacs. He was not wrong.

PART II

IS THERE A PROLETARIAN POETRY?

Chapter One

LITERATURE AS A CLASS INSTRUMENT

IS there a proletarian poetry? The Russian Communist Party has already answered this question with a categorical "Yes." It has answered it, in its usual fashion, in the form of a long resolution, initialled by all the members of the Central Committee, just as if it were an economic problem or a question of propaganda. *Fiat poesis!* Since July 1, 1925, proletarian literature has enjoyed official recognition; it is a part of the Bolshevik State, on a par with nationalized industry. Like the Ogpu, it is a 'class instrument.'

Let us try to translate some of the principal clauses of this ukase, intended for tame minds and servile pens. Full of ardour, the Central Committee declares:

> We have now entered into the full tide of the cultural revolution [a favourite epithet with the great untaught of Moscow], into a period which we must recognize as an important stage of the movement toward the organization of a Communist society. The new proletarian and peasant literature, from its most elementary manifestations, right up to its higher and 'ideologically conscious' [*sic*] productions, is the best expression of the cultural movement of the labouring masses.

But, alas! sighs the Central Committee,

> there are the complexity of the economic process, the parallel development of contradictory interests, the birth of the new

> *bourgeoisie* with its fatal attraction for intellectuals, and the facility with which the social depths chemically [*sic*] attract our agents away to the service of *bourgeois* ideals. All these factors cannot fail to react upon the literary side of public life.

Having laid down these propositions—in terms which, it must be confessed, do not speak well for proletarian literary style—the Central Committee establishes the principal rules of the Communist æsthetic:

> The class war should be carried on in literature, as everywhere else. In a society based on class distinctions there can be no such thing as neutral art, and the duty of the proletariat is to capture an ever-increasing number of sectors on the ideological front. Already dialectical materialism has commenced to permeate the biological and psychological sciences, and the same conquests await proletarian literature.

This pretentious farrago really amounts to the institution of civil war in literature with the idea of submitting it to the dictatorship of the proletariat. "The Higher Command in the domain of literature," the Central Committee affirms, "belongs only to the working class, and since proletarian writers do not yet exercise a complete hegemony, the Communist Party must help them to assert their historic right to this predominance."

The method, it will be observed, is precisely the same in politics and in art. Even the intellectual *élite* has to be created by administrative order. A writer is regarded by the authorities as 'proletarian' if he is a member of the Association of Proletarian Writers, just as any citizen of the U.S.S.R. who joins the Communist Party becomes *ipso facto* a member of the ruling aristocracy. In a State which claims a monopoly of all power, which is at one

and the same time a Church, a philosophical academy, and a school of morals, it could not be otherwise. Orthodoxy, whether it be political, religious, philosophical, or æsthetic, is necessarily a police matter. Under the strange name of Vapp (Vserossiskaya Associatzia Proletarskikl Pissatelei) the All Russian Association of Proletarian Writers reproduces the principal characteristics of the species. It has followed the example of the Communist Party by creating an intricate network of branches and 'cells.' According to the towns in which they are formed, the initials of whose names are adopted, they have an amazing variety of weird titles. Thus there is a Mapp in Moscow, a Lapp at Leningrad, a Rapp at Riazan, a Sapp at Saraloff, a Tapp at Tula, a Kapp at Kostroma—so many literary Chekas to challenge liberty of thought.

Let nobody imagine that we exaggerate. After its first full session, a veritable council of war of wild scribblers, the Vapp issued a proclamation which is likely to hold an unchallenged position as the most outrageous monument to Communist intolerance:

> Artistic literature is an incomparable instrument of war. . . . If it be true, as Marx has already pointed out, that the controlling ideas of any age are those of its governing class, the dictatorship of the proletariat is incompatible with the dominance of a non-proletarian literature. . . . To talk of a peaceful co-operation with the *bourgeoisie*, or of a friendly rivalry between various literary tendencies, is to plunge oneself into the deepest of reactionary Utopias. . . . The systems of thought which presume an equality of artistic values are really aiming at consolidating their position for an attack on the citadel of

proletarian literature. What could be more logical? Literature, under present conditions, is one of the last battle-grounds on which the *bourgeoisie* launches its supreme offensive against the proletariat.

The Vapp looks upon this duel as a death-struggle. Short of annihilating its adversary, the proletariat cannot hope to maintain its prerogative as the 'dominant class.' So intense is the panic fear which Bolshevism feels for the decimated and muzzled *bourgeoisie* that it finds a counter-revolutionary meaning even in the purely æsthetic productions of the vanquished class. The sole concession which the Vapp is prepared to make is a recognition of the necessity to "take from *bourgeois* literature what is really valuable in it—its progressive elements." Once more the Vapp maintains the classic tradition of Leninism; an apt pupil of the Red terrorists, and the expropriators, it transposes their methods to the sphere of literature; Bolshevism claims the right to nationalize not only banks and factories, but all the reliquaries in which for centuries Russian poetry has stored its imperishable jewels.

Vapp hastens to add, however, that proletarian literature must not be content to "profit by the accumulated reserves of the capitalist *régime*"; it must take its flight beyond the frontiers which mark the extreme limit of *bourgeois* effort and deal energetically with "the culture of a dead world." Authors, therefore, must be examined mercilessly, and only the pens consecrated eternally to Communism must be allowed to pass the test. Any writer, even though he may not be an enemy of the Revolution, will find himself condemned to the stake

by the Vapp and his books placed on the Index if he fails to dot the '*i*'s' of Bolshevism. No extenuating circumstances are admitted: the rainbow hues of a palette, the splendour of a style, the sweetness of a rhythm, will simply aggravate the crime of offering *bourgeois* poison to the proletariat in a chased goblet.

Even in Trotsky, who pushed the spirit of literary tolerance farther than any of the other Soviet leaders, we see what sharp judgments Communism has to pass upon the author guilty of a hesitation at the borders of the Revolution. Even in Block's poem *The Twelve*, which European opinion has hailed as a sort of Bolshevik epic, Trotsky finds principally a cry of anguish inspired by a crumbling past. Klueff, in spite of his peasant origin, his lyricism of terror, and his rustic metaphors in honour of Communism, has to suffer the same excommunication. In the true Marxian spirit Trotsky asks:

> What would be left of Klueff if we took away his peasant character? Klueff accepts the Revolution because the Revolution has emancipated the peasant. The Soviet Republic, according to this poet, remains simply Russia: the Promised Land, which he has glimpsed through Socialist spectacles, is a kingdom of wheat, of shining icons, and of many-coloured cottages; radio and electricity are barely tolerated.

It is true that, to prove his loyalty, Klueff one day poured bucketfuls of rubbish over the images of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, but deeper descents than this are needed to win the indulgence of the Red Zoilus. The critics have only contempt for so fruitless an infamy.

This example, selected from a thousand, indicates the inquisitorial spirit that presides over the relations

between the Revolution and literature. The literary police has the right of intercranial search, to make an inventory of the brain, and prosecute mental limitations. Criticism, like science, under the Soviet *régime*, belongs to the police force and the magistracy. An important member of the Central Committee, Comrade Sosnoffsky, has even specialized in the melancholy business of literary spy; armed with a magnifying-glass, he looks for traces of counter-revolution in a book, denouncing to the Cheka the least fragment of a phrase which appears to him to distil a capitalist poison. When M. Aichenwald published his fine volume *Poets and Poetesses*, a work in which he had the unspeakable audacity to strip the leaves from some of the flowers on the tombs of Fet and Tucheff, Sosnoffsky gave himself up in *Pravda* to an attack of foaming epilepsy. "Proletarian dictatorship!" he cried, "where is thy whip? Let us stone the writers who put on the asses' ears of reaction, and practise art for art's sake." Communism will have none of the poet retiring into his ivory tower, turning his back on the noises of the street, and communing with himself; it denies the right of the artist to call his soul his own. Sosnoffsky tears out the pages on which Sologub, Brussoff, Ivanoff, and Chulkoff have recorded their delicate reveries and their pious nostalgia. "In rereading Pushkin over a cup of tea," he sneers, "we are reconciled to wasted energies, to reaction, to stupidity." He that is not with the Revolution will find himself accused of being against it.

On the other hand, woe to those who venture to criticize the myrmidons grouped under the protection

of the Vapp! Unless, like Sosnoffsky, one is in the upper ranks of the Bolshevist hierarchy, it is necessary to mumble words of admiration and swing the thurible. To call to order a publication which seemed to him rather lukewarm in its enthusiasm for his work, the poet Wassily Kniaseff contented himself with pointing out that he was a member of the Communist Party.

M. Levinsson had incontinently to leave *Artistic Life* —a review in which he had permitted himself a mild criticism of Mayakoffsky's *Comic Mysteries*—on a charge of "undermining the foundations of the Soviet power and compromising revolutionary production," while the entire editorial staff of one of the principal Moscow periodicals, *Literature and the Revolution*, had to throw itself at the feet of Demian Bedny to purge the crime of certain lines derogatory to the glory of that Leninist bard.

Proletarian poetry is sacrosanct; it is a State poetry. Outside the Red Parnassus there is only a "weakness of the tear-duct, *bourgeois* short-sightedness, and paralysis of the will." Clear-cut as this distinction, drawn by no less a personage than Demian Bedny himself, undoubtedly is, it hardly suffices to define 'proletarian poetry.' All it tells us is that it is the opposite of *bourgeois* poetry, just as the Bolshevik *régime* is the contrary of the capitalist *régime*.

We shall look in vain for any more instructive definition in the official documents. A Government may push its mania for theorizing to the point of treating poetry as an administrative department, of putting it under bureaucratic control, and burying it under a pile of

circulars, but you cannot draw an *Ars Poetica* out of all this waste-paper. Even *Pravda* ends on a note of counter-revolutionary scepticism! "We have the Vapps, the Mapps, and the Lapps," it remarked on June 18, 1925. "We have motions, declarations and resolutions, but have we a literature? If so, which is it?"

Chapter Two

THE BOLSHEVIZATION OF LETTERS

THE concern displayed by *Pravda* is only too well founded. The Vapp is no more "a pillar without a crack," to quote Lenin's words, than is the Communist Party, of which it is the literary department. Just as there are within the borders of the 'directing party' a number of factions, all professing loyalty to the same master, so there is in the Vapp an unheard-of swarm of schools and coteries, all claiming the monopoly of Communist art theory.

To make a complete catalogue of these would be as tedious as it would be impossible. Proletarian poetry is a closed field given over to the play of the most extravagant depravities of word-intoxicated fanatics. Among these 'verbicides' it is sufficient to mention the Ameists, the Presentists, the Construists, the Symbolists, the Centrists, the Bezpredmetniki (or anti-literary faction), and the Nichevoli—these last-named perhaps the least dangerous of the lot, since they practise the *nichevo*[1] by declaring that "all poetry is abolished." Above these second-rate hysterics we find the great literary schools, such as Napostovtzy, who derive their name from the words *na postu*, or "faithful to the post," and apply themselves in accordance with the precepts of Vardin, to give rhythmic expression to Marxian principles; the

[1] "What does it matter?"—TRANSLATOR.

Kuzniza group, the poetic 'forge' of Bolshevism; the Imaginists, and finally the Futurists, with their extreme left wing—the Lef and the Egofuturists. Russian literature has never known a greater variety of sects and coteries than under the *régime* of complete levelling and extravagant centralization!

A Red humorist has found the appropriate description of the spectacle thus presented: "Instead of having found the poetry of machinery, we have invented the machinery of poetry!" This is more than a play upon words. This exuberant growth of literary laboratories answers to the privileged place which theories hold in all Bolshevik enterprises. Just as the Revolution is the product of Marxian dogma, so revolutionary poetry demands a proletarian theory of art as a condition of its existence. Bookish to the end, Bolshevism attaches a great deal more importance to codifying æsthetic laws than to the appearance of a spontaneous literature: the rules being once established, it remains only for artistic creation to adapt itself to them. It adds to the embarrassment of the Communist Party that Marx was too busy with the social revolution to find time to lay down the laws of revolutionary art; hence the irresolution of Bolshevism in face of the various poetic schools with which it is confronted. Accustomed to turn to its Talmud for an authoritative answer to all questions, it now floats about like a ship without a compass, adopting pilots in turn from the ranks of the Futurists, Presentists, or Imaginists, since they are all proletarians. These coteries, it may be added, answer to the Bolshevik ideal of collective effort, since they all represent an intellectual

workshop, and the Communist Party can hardly look with disfavour on the smoke that goes up from the chimneys of the factories in which the trade-union rhymesters work.

They do smoke, these factories! They smoke much more than the real factory chimneys, which are always short of coal. They spread great clouds of the eternal Russian smoke of verbal orgies and bewildering casuistry. "What is the distinctive mark of proletarian poetry?" ask the Byzantines of Marxism and the fops of the International. Is its essence to be found exclusively in revolutionary themes? And is it permissible to clothe those themes in capitalist fashions, to profane them by an out-of-date style?

Considered as a 'cosmic upheaval,' a 'planetary convulsion,' the Russian Revolution cannot decently stop its victorious advance at the walls of that last entrenchment of the capitalist, which is classicism. Its autocracy must be overthrown like that of the Tsars; the despotism of old prosody and outworn rhythms must be smashed. The proletarian character of the new poetry must be expressed not only in the choice of revolutionary subjects, but in a revolutionary manner of tuning the lyre and scanning the lines; it will be differentiated from *bourgeois* poetry by an artistic extremism corresponding to the political and social extremism. Style, rhyme, vocabulary, and, if necessary, grammar itself must be Bolshevized.

It is not surprising that, of all the 'poetry factories,' the Futurist establishment has best responded to the aspirations of artistic Communism. Is it not in the

literary domain a sort of Bolshevist advance-guard? "Throwing itself into the fight against conventional art," writes Comrade Gorloff, "Futurism finds itself in open rebellion against the *régime* which produced it." Potentially Communist in its own right, born of a poetic *coup d'état*—a sort of literary October—Futurism needed only the outburst of political futurism in order to become the official poetry.

Specious as its theory is, it enjoyed for a long time all the favours of the Soviets. The Proletkult had hardly been formed before it was transformed into the vassal of Futurism, and even to-day, as we shall see later, the diseased æstheticism of Lunacharsky, the official dictator of the fine arts and *belles-lettres*, continues to attach the Futurist troubadours to the retinue of the proletarian dictatorship. And why not? At the height of the terror Lunacharsky's first concern was to create a 'circus centre' at the Education Commissariat, and to gather together under the shelter of the Kremlin a veritable court of strolling players; a fiddling while Rome was burning! Thus the clowns throw themselves into the assault on the *bourgeois*. Some of the visitors to the sessions of the Proletkult arrived in carnival attire, drawn by camels, while others brought performing dogs and pigs. The favours of the proletariat are showered on the trainers of dancing bears, and the "Bim-Bom" duo were created "Jesters to his Majesty the People" by official order, while the Futurists enjoyed the dignity of official singers to the "Communist Fatherland." As an annexe to the 'poetry factories' Lunacharsky set up a Circus Academy, a 'clown factory.'

The fact is that, for this incurable sadism, the art of the circus is supreme, the circus raised to the level of a metaphysical conception, a systematic distortion and burlesque of life; Lunacharsky has juggled with the human brain, and trained men as though they were horses. To him artists are clowns, and this nightmare Barnum, whip in hand, has compelled science, religion, and morals to dance like a troop of monkeys. Why, then, should he draw the line at poetry?

The Futurist buffooneries have nevertheless provoked a violent reaction. By taking over actors and jugglers, and conferring a diploma of Communist orthodoxy on their fooling, Bolshevism has lowered its own prestige; it has gravely compromised the health of the proletariat by its promiscuity with a decadent dilettantism. It was necessary, therefore, to prove that Futurism had forged its claim to proletarian descent and made unjustified pretensions to revolutionary nobility. This was the work of Trotsky in a striking series of articles, subsequently collected in a volume. According to this pitiless bully,

> Futurism is a product of the *bourgeoisie* and bears its marks from the cradle. The October Revolution found it, not in the streets, but in the *cafés*. This is what might have been expected, in view of the real social origins of this '*bourgeois* Bohemianism' which, under a thin veneer of literary Nihilism, has really nothing revolutionary or proletarian about it.

Trotsky does not hesitate to strike at the roots of the Futurist school in order to illustrate his thesis. "Mayakoffsky," he writes, "shares the revolutionary hatreds, but he does not identify himself with the

Revolution." Hence the effort to camouflage an irreparable divorce by verbal eccentricities with a Leninist colouring. "Mayakoffsky and his colleagues," Trotsky continues, "pretend to out-thunder thunder. They bawl until their vocal cords are in danger. . . . They patronize the Revolution."

This unseemly familiarity seems to Trotsky to be the crime of Communist *lèse-majesté*. "Mayakoffsky and his fellows," he says, "fancy that to be a true revolutionary it is necessary to be coarse." And it is quite true that Futurism, which is usually rather pretentious and stilted, vulgarizes itself, as if by magic, when it deals with subjects connected with the Revolution. "Let us pick the pockets of the world," cries Mayakoffsky in his poem *The 150 Millions*, which endeavours to describe the tragedy of the Russian people, the 150 million peasants. The same forced truculence is found in Asséeff in his rhymed account of Budenny, the famous leader of the Soviet cavalry and Murat of Bolshevism. The Reds, here, test the mettle of the Whites, and "grind their revolutionary teeth"; these are the cold-blooded excesses of a 'fake' Bolshevism reduced to the expedients of the professional *littérateur*. Whether we take Mayakoffsky, Asséeff, Chicloffsky, Khlebnikoff, or Kruchenykh, we find the Futurists content to exploit Communism in the interests of their tricks of writing.

Hence it is that, in spite of the vulgar brutality of some of its notes and the tricks it plays with the instrument, the Futurist music does not really reach the revolutionary *clientèle*. Proletarian ears are offended

by the jerks in its rhythm, by the extravagances of its vocabulary, and by the excess of neologisms. Has not Mayakoffsky threatened that one of these days he will put mathematical formulæ into rhyme? Meanwhile this writer turns his mind to some surprising efforts:

> See! there arises
> From the far ocean depths
> A revolutionary committee of the seas.
> The guardians of the deeps,
> The champions of the waters,
> Climb
> On the crest
> Of the damp trenches,
> E'en up to heav'n,
> Thrusting themselves ahead
> And ever falling back.
> The waves have sworn
> To the central Oceanic Rulers
> Ne'er to unloose
> 'Til victory is theirs
> The sword of storm. . . .
> And they have conquered,
> On the equatorial line,
> These Sovietic drops
> Of power unlimited.

That is how Vladimir Mayakoffsky is pleased to describe the Atlantic Ocean! Here are his impressions of Paris:

> The water burns,
> The earth burns,
> The asphalt burns. . . .
> One senses that
> The very lamps repeat
> The multiplication table. . . .
> Were I the Vendôme Column,
> My bride should be the Place de la Concorde.

But now a more disquieting feature makes its appearance. Mayakoffsky treats the May Day celebrations of

Labour even more cavalierly than the *bourgeois* pavements of Paris. He contents himself with an extract from the Communist dictionary:

Nations !
Flame
Of Liberty,
O standard
Red, etc.

Let us do Mayakoffsky this justice: up to now he has employed Russian terms, and his neologisms have a certain resemblance to articulate language. These are qualities that become increasingly rare. The circus is by this time excessively tainted with classicism; it is too *bourgeois*, and at least two-thirds of the Futurist troubadours would prefer the zoological gardens or the padded cell. Grammar is pronounced "an enemy of the People." Asséeff takes liberties with it at which a fourth-form schoolboy would blush. Common sense itself is a melancholy inheritance from the counter-revolution. To realize this it is necessary only to cast an eye on the contents of the *Lef*, a periodical round which the advance-guard of Futurism, the Kruchenykhs, the Terentieffs, and Zdanevitches, have grouped themselves.

Zgara-amba
Zgara-amba
Zgara-amba
Zgara-amba.
Amb.
Trunk. Flax. Day. Shadow.
Poc. Lok. Dok. Ook.
Cha-Cha
Amo.

. . . . .

Rzilipara,
Tam-tara-tra
Tztza-tzap.

It is perfectly true that dada-ism is not a phenomenon peculiar to Soviet Russia, and that everywhere, apart altogether from any question of the political *régime* which happens to exist, a neurasthenic minority will try to put its ejaculations into verse. But whereas elsewhere dada-ism moves the world either to pity or to contempt it is able in Moscow to put out its tongue at the world, and to carry on under the official protection of the Commissariat of Education. Lunacharsky has followed Futurism in its wanderings toward the madhouse and the menagerie. He receives devoutly the brayings that proceed from the cage or the straitwaistcoat, accords them the honours of the official Press, and publishes them at the expense of the State. He encourages with all his might the development of the *komfuts*—Futurist 'cells'—where lunatics declaim their gibberish, and their hearers, according to the consecrated phrase, "change the dirty breeches of their souls." In short, for the Grand Master of the Red University, the most pathological distortions of Futurism and the worst hiccups of the dada-ists express the essence of proletarian poetry.

The most intractable *bourgeois* will willingly accept this estimate. The verbal sadism is not only a symptom of artistic decadence, it is also an unmistakable sign of social decadence. It makes of poetry an esoteric domain, the perquisite of a little set of inverted æsthetes, an opium den which is not open to the crowd.

Paradoxically enough, the result of it all is that the Bolshevization of style makes it impossible in the long run for poetry to achieve the Bolshevik aspirations. In order to win its title of 'proletarian,' poetry has to learn to hymn the Revolution in a language that the revolutionaries cannot understand!

Chapter Three

ATTEMPTS AT SYNTHESIS

THE Imaginist school professes to satisfy this fundamental condition without sacrificing any of the demands of art; it aims at a balance of Communist themes with the exuberances of a very colourful style. To the poets of this galaxy the Revolution always presents itself under the aspect of an almost cosmic dynamism, a planetary upheaval. The smallest workshop, seen through the eyes of Vasili Kazin, becomes a great "celestial factory," able to eclipse the lightnings. A workman, after his day's labour, makes his way toward the evening's rest; a Red anthem sings in his heart; he ascends ever higher with the bricks of the buildings that are being raised, the bricks as red as his song; ever higher he mounts, even up to "the blue roof of heaven."

The inspiration here seems to be as orthodox as anybody could desire, and the theme is as proletarian as possible. According to André Bely, the Red song of the red bricks should be the model of working-class poetry. André Bely, however, is only a *bourgeois* poet whose brain is clogged up with outworn prejudices, and such ecstasies as his could only compromise a revolutionary poet. To the Soviet critics the verse of Kazin is too 'respectable,' too 'affected,' too 'correct'; the poet has not been able to descend from his artificial Olympus in order to mix with the density of the Bolshevized

masses. His Red songs, according to Ossinsky, are elaborated according to the stalest recipes of everyday literature; they are sickly caramels, and Kazin's workman—the giant who climbs to the heavens and puts out the stars—is a patented product of "intellectual confectionery," a gingerbread revolutionary.

Gratitude is certainly not among the Communist virtues. Essenin, that paragon of Imaginism, who was praised to the skies even by his adversaries after his death, had to content himself in life with an equally vehement offering of blows. And yet this youngster, gorged with good living and with vodka, this troubadour of the Muscovite brothels, began by giving himself body and soul to the Revolution. He professed 100-per-cent. Bolshevism, and applied his principles at once on the moral and artistic planes, and even on the sartorial. Did he not 'Marxize' the *bourgeois* dinner-jacket by the addition of yellow-calf shoes and the display of a scarlet tie-pin on a coloured shirt-front? Did he not write about his manner of drinking and living—a flow of muddy ink, a sombre revolutionary frenzy, lighted up, here and there, with flashes of his liquor-inflamed imagination?

Essenin, alone among the 'proletarian' poets, has found in Communism material and antecedents on the epic scale; his impulsive enthusiasm has led him to endow the Revolution with an *Iliad*, made to order, a poem to the glory of Pugachoff, "that predecessor of Marx and of Lenin." The Cossack adventurer who passed himself off as an emperor, the semi-Mongolian bandit at the head of his barbarous hordes, is elevated

in this uneven piece of work into a sort of Bolshevik Hector, Æneas, or Roland. Through the vapours of his eternal intoxication Essenin catches a clear intuition of the Asiatic origins of the Russian ferment:

O Asia, Asia, azure-tinted land,
Sprinkled with salt, with sand, and with cement . . .
As yonder moves the moon slowly across the sky!
And yet with what strong pride and with what ardent strength
Thy golden manes, thy rivers, flow down the mountain-sides!

Was it not thus the Mongol bands rushed on?
For long, ah! long, have I not felt the urge
To join their nomad tribes,
To lead a turbulent host of high-cheek-boned advancers,
Like some new Tamerlaine, on to the verge of Russia?

And in this nocturnal setting does the Communist Orient struggle in the wake of an imperial phantom:

The moon, beating her yellow wings,
Pinks all the bushes like a sparrowhawk.

And here is Pugachoff's peroration:

Know you not? Great news the common people hear,
Like a great ship borne on the free waves' crest!
Our peasants love to crouch beast-like upon the ground,
And suck from monstrous udders this great news,
That some unknown great chief
Leads the dead shadow of an emperor
On to the charge on Russia's vasty spaces . . .
The *Angelus* of mutiny is heard . . .
And peasant curses sound at heaven's gate . . .
Russia is all astir. . . .

Everything in this poem, matter and form, is calculated to flatter a *régime* which has raised statues to the worst adventurers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to Razin and to Pugachoff; the beatification of the *jacqueries*, the crudity of the style, the barbarity

of the images, the audacity of the rhythm, are all entirely appropriate. The Verlaine of Bolshevism feels that he has attained in a single leap to the rank of a proletarian Homer. He boasts of having passed several months among the Caucasian robbers, and even of having practised, in an excess of professional conscientiousness, the morals that he describes. He reckons, however, without the poison of uncontrollable suspicion which afflicts the Russian Revolution, as it does all revolutions, and sets its directors looking for bomb-plots even among the thuribles that are swung in front of the Communist icons. "Comrade Essenin," writes the merciless Ossinsky, "has confused the sentiment of unrest with the revolutionary spirit." Trotsky is even more severe: "Essenin's poetry dissolves in the Revolution instead of uniting with it; that is the fate reserved for all writers who, without being true revolutionaries, have followed the path of the Revolution, to become its dancing dervishes." Trotsky continues:

> All these writers make terms with the Revolution, not, alas! because it is an efficient cause of progress, but because, from some points of view, it represents a retreat and reaction. We know only too well that the peasant has tried to open his arms to the Bolsheviks and repel Communism. He has wanted to pillage history, break up the town, and then, having feathered his nest, turn his back on the State. Now it is the towns that must govern the nation. Eliminate the town and what is left of the Revolution but a bloody, tumultuous, and retrograde experiment? That is all the Revolution has ever been for Essenin.

These criticisms have the merit of throwing the light of day on the original vice which pure Communists find

at the root of the Imaginist poetry. They regard it as giving a peasant, rather than a proletarian, interpretation of the Revolution. A poetry of this kind makes a *tabula rasa* of industrial workmanship; it sacrifices the factory, cradle of the Communist dictatorship, to the countryside, which is the scene of violent spasmodic risings. Instead of glorifying the rise of the proletariat toward the scientific organization of the society of the future, it persists in celebrating the rural revolution, which is the most formless, the most barbarous, and, in a word, the most reactionary of revolutions. It is not class poetry.

Finally, in the wake of all these avatars, there is a coterie with the promising and symbolic name of Kuzniza ("the Forge"), which has attempted not only a synthesis, now complete, of the working-class theme with the working-class style, but the establishment of a formula, which shall serve as a test of finely tempered steel. A really proletarian poetry, proceeding from the pens of horny-handed sons of toil, must have the brightness, the cohesion, the solidity of the steel modelled on Soviet anvils.

The theorists of the Kuzniza, like good revolutionaries, begin by brushing away all the wreckage of the past. It is a Draconian undertaking. The *bourgeois*, the semi-*bourgeois*, the simple suspects, are thrown into the tumbrels, moribund, already three-parts decayed, living corpses, that it would be a waste of time to shoot, and that need only to be put in the mortuary. The literature of yesterday, according to the Kuzniza and its principal satellites—Kiriloff, Liochko, Sanniko, Aikuni,

Bezymensky—is as powerless to come to terms with the working class as a dead man is to shake hands with the living. Futurism is "an overgrowth of intellectual individualism" underneath the embellishments of a bewildered verbosity. Imaginism is the supreme convulsion of the *petit bourgeois* which occupies its last hours in the pursuit of delirious images. Technique is no longer a means to an end, it is the goal of literary production. The poet spends himself on immense poems, in letting loose cascades of song, purely to produce hitherto unheard-of rhymes and ring the changes on new alliterations. Iambics and tropes are dislocated, lines are cut into half-lines, half-lines into quarter-lines, words broken up into syllables and the syllables into letters. The infinitesimal calculus is applied to prosody and the imponderables driven out. And underneath these acrobatics the Kuzniza reveals a physiological extravaganza; a pornographic madness, the St Vitus's dance of excited gorillas. The poets have lowered themselves to the level of apes. "The hour has come," cries the Kuzniza, "to galvanize a mummified art and to unfurl the red flag in the wilderness of literature."

With the ground thus cleared, the hammer-men of the new poetry announce their programme with the dogmatic *hauteur* which characterizes all the Bolshevik encyclicals:

> Proletarian art must flourish as an expression of proletarian ideas. . . . Proletarian art is a prism through which there converge the rays of a class. . . . Hence our task is to model the types of revolutionary humanity and to mould the conceptions of Marxian materialism in artistic forms. The style is the class.

This last aphorism—a paraphrase of Buffon's famous dictum, "The style is the man"—indicates a line of demarcation between proletarian and *bourgeois* poetry. To identify the style with the man is a heresy under the Communist *régime*. A republic which has nationalized the means of production cannot tolerate personal influences in literature; it cannot stop half-way in its work of socialization; it has to impress upon style a class character in order to adapt it to class ideas and sentiments. Only thus can the unity of revolutionary matter and form be preserved. But if the 'capitalist' definition of Buffon is capable of providing excellent themes for composition in the Upper Forms, the 'Communist' definition is far from being equally precise. The Kuzniza itself, when it seeks to convey the essential idea of its formula, loses itself in a pedantic declamation of Communist pontiffs:

> Proletarian art is an art embracing the three dimensions of the materials offered to its creative power; it gives these materials a synthetic form appropriate to the tendencies of its class, developing proletarian aspirations toward their proper ends. It is essentially a monumental art, and a class animated by a universal spirit of solidarity in labour, in victory, and in defeat can only create art in its own image and likeness. Its sonorous and colourful language, so rich in imagery, is able to draw life as easily from the murky haunts of the lowest forms of organized existence as from the higher planes of majestic conceptions and complex ideas.

So much for the theory; what of its application?

The Kuzniza prides itself upon having produced at least two poets who are recognized by the majority of

Communist critics as true, great, and authentic proletarian poets—Philipchenko and Bezymensky. "There is a workers' poetry, just as there are a workers' class and a workers' State," cries Comrade Iarovoy in a dithyrambic article in *Pravda*; if proof were needed, Philipchenko has supplied it in his collection, *The Glorious Age*. There is no longer any room for scepticism.

How, indeed, could anyone doubt the orthodoxy of a man who commends himself to his readers in these terms:

> I am not only Philipchenko: I am the proletariat,
> I am the bold tocsin of a holy madness . . .
> I am your singer, and I am a blacksmith. . .

and, after this introduction, proceeds to reduce the whole human race to the proletariat alone:

> He who is not a smith is not a man.

This absence of humility, this clang of the "bold tocsin," causes Comrade Iarovoy to quiver with enthusiasm: "Nietzsche's superman is a *bourgeois* abstraction; the superman of Philipchenko is a living reality, whom the entire universe will hail to-morrow as lord and master." What matter if the smith is

> Hungry, ragged, unshod. . . .
> The sweat, like *mazout*,[1] crudely lubricates
> The days of our dark lives.
> But we don't care a damn.

To justify his optimism the poet recalls that the proletariat has "millions of arms, millions of fingers." The future belongs to it, because it is the class cemented by

[1] The combustible residue from the distillation of crude mineral oils.—TRANSLATOR.

a common hope, a band superior to gods, to kings, to Cyclops, and to Titans:

> We are the head, living and bright,
> Of all humanities and all millenniums. . . .
> We are the thoughts of a single bulging forehead,
> The letters of the cosmic alphabet.

After such ecstasies nothing remains except to deify 'the class,' and Philipchenko does not hesitate to take this final step on the customary note of "evolutionary dialectic and historical materialism," in congratulating the earth on being able to house the proletariat on its surface and to dance "a sacred dance of labour" round the sun which envies it this privilege. How proud it should be, this muddy clod which is the earth! How it should shout its happiness in the face of the stars! It is "the world of worlds," full from end to end with human hands:

> The bricks tremble: they are workmen's palms . . .
> The pavings of the streets, the workers' fists . . .
> The columns and the chimneys are their hands.

In his preface to *The Glorious Age* Brussoff does not stint his praise of the "blacksmith-poet," but while paying a tribute to his originality, to his temperament, and the profundity of his intentions he cannot quite smother a sigh at seeing this Pindar of the forge abandoning the bright paths of pure poetry. It was an unhappy remark. *Pravda* dealt hastily with this display of capitalist nostalgia. This is a fine thing! sneers the organ of the Central Committee. So Philipchenko has cut himself off from pure poetry! He has closed his ears to the appeal of airy nothings! He is deaf to the incantations of kid-gloved poets! And *Pravda* absolves

its poet in one of those lapidary phrases which reveal the intimate depths of a doctrine: "The proletariat has no use for pure poetry."

Revolutionary poetry, in fact, is not a luxury, an end in itself. It is bound to treat as treason to Communism any descent into the *bourgeois* narcissism. Like the rods and levers, whose movements it sings, it must pursue a utilitarian end, and he who runs must be able to read.

Style must be free, then, from the slightest trace of an elegance that would clash with grimy finger-nails and stained waistcoats. It must be vulgar and prejudiced. Philipchenko's great merit, in Comrade Iarovoy's eyes, is of a negative order: this poet has not betrayed his working-class origins: "he has not raised to heaven the towering spires of aerial cathedrals; his style recalls rather the massive blocks of primitive architecture."

It is an illuminating confession! Bolshevism finds itself ill at ease in the ethereal regions; it is at home only among rough-hewn stones; it draws poetry, as it does science, and morals, inevitably back to the cave. For the consequence of barring the road to the heavens is not to chain the poets to earth, it is to push them underground, to make them wander in the darkness, among the *mazout* and the "dark life" of Philipchenko's poem. Kiriloff, though an imitator of Philipchenko and Bezymensky, ends by shaking the bars of the Communist prison with desperate hands:

> Our critics are wrong in imposing upon proletarian poets a style accessible to the great mass of the working class and judging works of art by their immediate popularity. It is not fair to blame us for the slightest trace of refinement, the least

display of concern for the formal aspect of art. Such criticisms show a complete failure to understand æsthetics.[1]

It is the voice of poetry itself that we hear in this protest, expressing from the Communist cave, through the lips of Kiriloff, its nostalgia of heaven. If, under the pen of Philipchenko, it is still able to sound now and again a sharp accent of original lyricism, and if it finds sometimes the occasion of an heroic flight in the smoke of the ironworks and some decorative touch in the Revolution, with other poets—with Bezymensky and Demian Bedny—there is a total eclipse, poetry is reduced, beyond hope of deliverance, to the vegetation of the cave-man. It is simply a paraphrase of the articles in *Pravda* and the prospectuses of the Third International: Communist prose chopped up into lines of unequal length.

That is why Bezymensky and Demian Bedny rank high above Philipchenko in the front rank of proletarian rhymesters. "Bezymensky," writes *Izvestia* of February 24, 1925, "is our poet, in the full meaning of the term. He is not only a citizen-poet, he is a class poet. He is steeped up to the neck in politics." And this newspaper goes on to congratulate the poet warmly on having renounced his own father in a work which has become famous, *The Portrait*. The only family that Bezymensky recognizes is the Communist Party. He has one ambition only:

> To remain the worthy son
> Of my mother, R.K.P.[2]

[1] *Review of the Kuzniza*, No. 4.

[2] The "Russkaya Komunisticheskaya Partia," or Russian Communist Party.

There is only one religion, the cult of Lenin. After the death of the Master he published, says *Izvestia*, this "unforgettable poem," which will for ever be recited at workmen's gatherings: *Membership Card No. 224,332 of the Communist Party* (Lenin's card):

"Whom do you seek, O party?"
Sadly a voice replies:
"A member's card." . . .
But a vast proletarian wave,
Under the auspices of the International,
Will shortly fill that gaping hole. . . .
Ere many months a hundred thousand cards
Will compensate the lost certificate of Lenin.

Philipchenko deified the Proletariat, an elastic conception since there are proletarians who are not yet Bolsheviks. Bezymensky is more true to the mind of the Third International in reserving his canonization solely for the Communist Party:

The Universe is in these words:
"The Party Congress."

Granted this principle, any manifestation of the Communist Party, however hateful, however bloodthirsty, is encircled by a halo:

To me the Cheka is a beacon light. . . .
I am the first to cry: "Mow down our foes!"
And mine are all the Cheka's cannon-balls,
And when the victims perish I am there.

The Cheka is a saint, its torturers and agents are heroes. To this heredity of steel, to these children of October, Bezymensky has devoted a whole volume:

We must go
To smash the rich peasants. . . .
I do not march, I fly. . . .
I cry to all who pass. . . .

His cry is one of those outrageous oaths known only to the Russian language, which drags the honour of mothers through the gutter. Bezymensky, moreover, has found a new spice for these outpourings of a drunken peasant. His working women " spit into the faces of their children " insults in which they acknowledge themselves to be prostitutes. And delighted critics hail Bezymensky as a " worthy son " of his " mother," the Communist Party.

If the reader will imagine an even fouller slime than this he may form some idea of the style of Demian Bedny, the prince of proletarian poets, decorated with the Star of the Red Flag and mentioned in Army Orders as " Cavalier of Letters." Nearly every day the lines of Demian Bedny have the place of honour in the Muscovite dailies : rhymed accounts of the news, fables, epigrams, satires, a farrago which generally defies translation, through the excess of those abbreviations of which the Soviet jargon is full, infested with outrageous puns and cock-and-bull stories in the worst of taste.

Demian Bedny finds his subjects in barracks, in workshops, and in the sordid underworld. His *clientèle* is drawn from the very flower of Bolshevism, the profiteers and the *condottieri* of the revolutionary dictatorship. This Red underworld needed a poet who would speak their language and paraphrase in allegorical forms the harangues of a Rykoff or a Stalin, to be hummed between two meetings. Play-actor-in-chief of this sordid demagogy, Demian Bedny is a past-master at flattering its appetites and its hatreds ; he throws it as sops the rich

peasant, the supporters of the New Economic Policy, the priest, and God. The most abominable parody of the Sacred Scriptures that has yet been penned is from the pen of Bedny. It is entitled *The New Testament*, by the Evangelist Demian, and it is a hymn to the glory of Judas Iscariot:

> 'Twas he; it was not Peter and not Paul
> Who through the world has made the name of Jesus known. . . .
> Believe not 'twas the angels, it was he
> Who, in a sudden fever of the brain,
> Rolled back the stones before the tomb of Christ,
> And thus the Resurrection was his work.

In the success of Demian Bedny we can grasp the essential feature of proletarian poetry. By the grimacing mockery of the thought, by the vulgar crudity of the language, this author shows himself something more than an offshoot of the Communist Party; he is the spiritual double of Lenin. If Lenin had written verse it would have been like Demian Bedny's. It is with good reason, therefore, that Bolshevism has bestowed on Demian Bedny its favours and its decorations. It has recognized in the verse of its poet the prose of its Messiah, without realizing that this amounts to a denial of the existence of any proletarian poetry.

Chapter Four

CONFESSIONS OF FAILURE

IT is fair to admit that some of the leading Communists have ended not only by admitting but also by explaining the absence of a true proletarian poetry. No fear of compromising themselves has deterred them from pushing their analysis right back to the first causes of the failure of the victorious class to find in its victory the substance of artistic production.

"A certain degree of civilization," Trotsky admits humbly, "is the fundamental condition of all literature. Before we think of a Socialist literature, therefore, we must provide the foundations for it. That is to say, we must have Socialism, even if only in a rough draft."

But even this preliminary outline of a Socialist State is lacking: such is Trotsky's terrible admission. The dictatorship of the proletariat has outdistanced the development of the proletariat, and the new governing class has not enjoyed, like the *bourgeoisie*, the incomparable advantage of serving its apprenticeship, in spite of the domination of its own class enemy, the nobility, and at times even in collaboration with it. "The proletariat," declares Trotsky, "had to upset the *bourgeoisie* before setting itself to acquire *bourgeois* culture." It is a terrible admission. Never has a *régime* dared to castigate itself so severely in public.

Trotsky would not be a Marxist if he did not know

how to mingle even with his act of contrition such declarations as that "there is more of science, of beauty, and of culture in the Communist Manifesto than in all the libraries and museums of the world." He is speaking, however, of assets to be realized, in the form of poetry and of art, in a distant future when the proletariat will at last have some surplus energies. For many long years the severe demands of the Revolution are going to absorb all available energy; the proletariat has to cultivate its fallow land and furbish up its worn-out machinery before it will have either the inclination or the leisure to cultivate flowers in the precincts of its workshops.

In what magic caskets, indeed, are the seeds of these flowers to be found? The proletarian Revolution has ravaged aristocratic and *bourgeois* Russia from top to bottom, it has done away with the symbolic "Cherry Orchards," celebrated by Chekhoff, uprooted the most ancient trees, and thrown the flowers and fruits to all the winds of civil war. Trotsky himself, for all his Olympian pose, cannot avoid a shiver of pain at the spectacle of this clean sweep. With the possessing classes smashed, the Red superman is driven to ask himself what remains in Russia to-day.

> A peasant civilization, or rather the absence of all culture. . . . The Russian Revolution is the peasant camouflaged as a proletarian. Our art is an intellectual creature vacillating between the proletarian and the peasant, a being incapable by definition of allying itself with one or the other. Hence there is a yawning gulf between the Revolution and art. . . . True, we have talented proletarians, but we have no proletarian literature.

One of these talented proletarians, Boris Pilniak, has indicated one of the flaws in the Red steel with the same frankness and courage. In his volume *What do the Writers think of their Art?* he writes:

> Our State has installed incubators of Communist literature, but writers hatched in this fashion cease to be politicians without becoming artists. . . . Our poets are fewer than our literary *crèches*. . . . The Communists try to fit parts together and make a literature, as though this exquisite luxury could be produced by mechanical artifice; they will obtain it one day or another, at some unknown date when the whole of existence has become Communist. Meanwhile proletarian literature reduces itself to propagandist pamphlets.

This is a far cry from the resounding proclamations in which the Vapp declares for the artistic hegemony of the proletariat, and condemns heretics to a general massacre. After Trotsky and Pilniak we have Ossinsky going a step further. Not without heroism, his pen whistling through the air like a bludgeon, he throws himself into the assault on bloated pretensions and sterile vanities. "The proletariat has not produced intellectual values which justify a literary dictatorship," cries this thorough-going Bolshevik in an article that *Pravda*, frightened at the responsibility, published only "for its public interest." "To say any other," the writer proceeds, "is a deception which deadens the critical sense of the proletariat and gives it a false idea of its importance, a particularly dangerous deception at a time when workers and peasants ought to have only one aim—to learn, learn, learn." So far as the choice of teachers is concerned, Lenin, with his customary

abruptness, has settled the question: "Our real masters are the *bourgeoisie*."

Having delivered himself of this bludgeon-blow, Ossinsky attacks the folly of applying the methods of the class war fanatically and indiscriminately to literature:

> We can labour to assimilate a culture, but we cannot take it by storm. An offensive of this kind threatens to smash civilization into pieces and to smash the heads of the assailants, however long it lasts. . . . The proletarian can seize the professorial chairs and the laboratories, but, short of expropriating at the same time the brains of the professors, he will find himself in the position of the peasant who has 'nationalized' a piano. . . . What does a sensible peasant do? He invites a representative of the old culture to give music lessons to his daughter. . . . The whole proletariat should follow his example.

It is all the more necessary that it should do so, because the Russian proletariat, like the peasant's daughter, ought to confine itself for the moment to five-finger exercises. Artistic execution is closed to it, not only from lack of technical experience, but because of the distressing poverty of its inspiration. In order to have a proletarian muse it is not sufficient, in the words of the poet Poletaeff, to have driven out the "venial and powdered muse" of the "capitalists." Its place remains unoccupied. The proletariat has not yet encountered on the rocky roads of its dictatorship the divine guide ready to accompany its ascent toward the light. The Russian Revolution has not, like the French Revolution, created its own hymn. It has not found a Communist Rouget de Lisle, nor advanced beyond declamatory

platitudes which have been trained through the suburbs of all the European capitals before receiving an official consecration in Moscow. It has imported the Internationale *en bloc* with Marxism. Crude copy of a foreign theory, it has had to scramble pell-mell into the wagons of the foreigner, from its leaders down to its choral societies. It is one huge plagiarism.

Trotsky's question presents itself again, more poignantly than ever: "What is left in Russia?" The Futurists have proclaimed "the alliance of the U.S.S.R. with the sun"; Mayakoffsky even turns the sun into a "Communist monocle"; the Imaginists have created biceps sufficient to "make the two hemispheres kick." Long before Bolshevism Nekrassoff described the sterile fermentation of the future in a celebrated line: "The young army of progress is content to kick. . . ." Kicks for common sense, insolent contortions of revolutionary phrases: this tedious agitation may mask for a moment the incurable aridity of Bolshevik poetry, but, like all violence, it is ephemeral. One cannot go on pawing and kicking for ever. Even the revolutionary lava settles on the slopes of the Red craters; everything, down to the proletariat, has to retire to its bed.

And, once there, driven back to the workshop, to the barracks, driven underground, what are the themes of its poetry? Where does it find its inspiration?

"Everyday life is stagnant and sad," writes Trotsky. According to Lunacharsky in *Izvestia*,[1]

> The workman cannot like the kind of existence to which he is condemned. . . . The capitalist *régime* reserved a shocking

[1] No. 79; article on Ostroffsky.

> fate for the proletariat. Whereas in the customs of all social classes, whether we consider peasants, shopkeepers, the middle classes, or big business, there were cherished beauty, pleasure, and traditions; proletarian existence was without a trace of beauty. . . . The Revolution has left this miserable and dull existence unchanged. Proletarian life is simply one continuous suffering.

This confession of faith enables us to understand Lunacharsky's theory of art: forgetfulness of the realities of proletarian existence, at the price of the worst forms of drugging, so long as it will banish the taste of the black bread which the 'directing class' is compelled to eat. Reduced to an unrelieved diet of Communism, the Russian workman, Socialism's "new Messiah," aims no higher than the digestive system in his conception of happiness. Even the most enthusiastic of the Bolshevik poets prefer to describe the means of production rather than the producer, the smithy rather than the smith. When they try to hymn the messengers of the gospel of Marxism their enthusiasm falls flat, and their verses stumble in the gutter. As Bezymensky and Demian Bedny have testified, and as Kovyneff, Sayanoff, and Kuznezoff can bear witness, we must understand by proletarian poetry a poetry intended only for the mob.

Such a poetry alone will satisfy the taste of the chosen class. "A workman or a peasant in Saratoff," complains Poletaeff, "cares nothing for our verses; he wants clothes and boots." Bending over the land or over the anvil, these conscripts of Socialism have neither time nor inclination to scan lines of poetry. Their literary needs are little more than protoplasmic. If by chance

they should come to life they are quickly paralysed by the wretched rates of wages. *Pravda* estimates that the best-paid and most educated worker, the printer, can afford at most, if he is thrifty and sober, seventy-seven copecks per month for the education of his children and the purchase of books and newspapers! Such a sum is insufficient for a monthly subscription to *Pravda*! Never was literature so neglected in Russia as under the *régime* which talks continually of 'culture,' which sets itself up as a publisher and librarian, and endeavours, in the spirit of a Mæcenas, to transform the State. Night and day the Soviet rotary machines turn out piles of printed paper; prose and poetry are accumulated by the ton in the back rooms of Proletkult and Gosizdat, but they only come out to be sold by weight as waste-paper and to perish ingloriously in a pulping-machine. According to *Izvestia*, the unsold—and unsaleable—volumes chargeable on the State budget reached the sum of thirty-five million roubles in the first six months of 1926. At the Congress of the Vapp in May 1928 the President, Comrade Khalatoff, disclosed some equally instructive figures. "The saleable issues range from 10,000 to 30,000 copies; what is that for a population of 140 million inhabitants with some 200,000 public libraries?"

In order to "attract the masses to the printed word," and especially in order to attempt to liquidate the excess of a vast over-production, the publishing houses—in other words, the State—have for some time organized a sort of periodical fair under the queer title of "Book Parade."

This is an orgy of red flags and ribbons, a deafening din of brass and accordeons, with artists paid by the hour to declaim the verses of unknown poets, all the tricks and catch-penny side-shows of a suburban bazaar. A special women's edition of *Das Kapital* is issued with a hitherto unpublished portrait of Karl Marx, in which the bushy beard of the Socialist prophet has given place to the waxed moustachios of a cavalry officer. But there are more surprising items, such as a large, highly coloured metal monkey, who, for ten copecks in the slot, will open his mouth and put out his tongue, on which is to be found a manual of gynæcology or Demian Bedny's *New Testament*. Above the ape is a proud inscription: "The Book Parade is an army on the march; every book is a projectile fired at the dull citadel of ignorance." But, complains *Pravda*, how many 'dud' shells there are among those projectiles! Proletarians scratch their heads in perplexity before Gaston Boissier's venerable volume, *Cicero and his Friends*, translated for no very obvious reason. "What was this Cicero? Was he a revolutionary, a majority Socialist, or a White general?" There is the same uncertainty, the same perspiring bewilderment, in face of the swaying piles of the *Literary Pantheon*, an abortive effort by Maxim Gorky to provide cheap reprints of world-famous poetry for poor workmen and peasants. But, above all, in the overwhelming majority of cases, there is the same indifference. The crowd passes, dull and weary, by the side of unwanted geniuses. The treasures lie neglected. The crowd wants clothes and boots.

As for poetry—poor Cinderella of the proletariat—

short of being submerged in the official ribaldry or the eccentricities of cubism, what will be the fate of her last servants?

Chelaeff, Kuznezoff, Michael Golodny, Sobol, and Essenin—to mention only the most famous—have answered that question. Some have even answered it at the cost of their life and their talent: drink or suicide, and sometimes suicide after drink. The colourless and miserable existence of which Lunacharsky speaks creates an incurable decline. "All the faces look alike," mourns Asséeff, "and they all look like corpses. . . ." In quest of forgetfulness, of self-forgetfulness, the poets throw themselves into the hands of the Green Fairy.[1]

She is their final muse. "In the land of the Soviets," writes Michael Golodny, "the poets and workmen vegetate in the cabaret." Essenin goes further. Summoned before the revolutionary tribunal for his scandals and his anti-Semitism, he sang a hymn in praise of drunkenness and robbery, dwelling complacently on his obscene jokes and his debauches, and ending with the heart-breaking cry: "I seek my conscience at the bottom of the glasses that I empty!"

The cases of Essenin and of Sobol throw a little light on unsuspected depths. Their life and death epitomize the history of *belles-lettres* under the auspices of the hammer and sickle. Across a double foam of vodka and of blood they permit us to plumb the depths of the Muscovite experiment. Essenin, as we have seen, practises Bolshevism as a 'soaker,' but from Bolshevism, as from alcohol, after ten years of outrageous licence

[1] Absinthe.—TRANSLATOR.

he has drawn only a mortal disgust, an irremediable nausea:

> Oh! the sadness of confessing
> That I have asked too little of my youth,
> Staggering in the smoky air of cheap *cafés*.

With Bolshevism, as with alcohol, there is the same slimy and repugnant residue, the same intolerable bitterness, and, at last, in the poisoned body, the same return of a conscience, which is dying of thirst and clamouring its nostalgia. The last verses of Essenin are a terrible indictment:

> I am now unknown,
> I do not understand the language of my fellows. . . .
> They do not want my poetry any longer,
> And I perhaps—who knows?—am useless myself.

With the intuitive vision of a dying man Essenin had a sudden glimpse of a hitherto unknown desolation, an apocalyptic ruin and catastrophe:

> A ghastly sleigh has galloped through the land,
> Spreading everywhere dust and noise,
> To disappear with an infernal shriek.
> My soul! A fatal road we have traversed. . . .
> What have we seen? And what is left of our poor country?

And the cynic who, in a lecture tour in New York and Berlin, spoke of Russia as a prostitute, falls on his knees and beats his breast:

> Russia, belovèd, pardon me.

Before he fastened the fatal rag to the lock of his room Essenin pierced an artery and dipped in his pen, to write a few illegible lines in red. This gruesome tragedy merely symbolized the last days of the disillu-

sioned poet, for he had for many months used blood for ink, his verses being no more than a death-rattle. When a 'proletarian poet' has held out his arms toward the phantom of a murdered fatherland there is nothing left for him but to die; he can no longer live in a Russia that calls itself the U.S.S.R. Let him disappear into the common hole, where Bolshevism, in great handfuls, for ever throws the brain of the nation.

From the purely Communist angle, 'the class angle,' Sobol's end is even more dramatic. This delicate stylist, a poet in his day, gave himself body and soul to the Revolution, serving it with the tenderness of a son, the fidelity of a page, the respect and the courage of a paladin. Blind to the faults of a mother or a queen, he accepted everything in Communism; like Bezymensky, he glorified even the turpitudes of the Cheka. But, little by little, the triumphant march gives place to the rude ascent to the Communist Calvary. No longer is the Revolution a scarlet standard unfurled in the sunshine, but a cross to be carried on bleeding shoulders. As far back as 1924 Sobol fell under the weight and took arsenic, but Communism saved him in spite of himself; it brought him back to life and to suffering. There were eighteen months of unconquerable disgust, with an inevitable extinction of belief, of hope, of illusion, and then, more efficacious than the dose of arsenic, a friendly bullet straight in the heart brought death and deliverance. In Sobol's personal diary, of which the *Krasnaya Gazeta* published extracts, we read:

> I have had my fill. I cannot live any longer. . . . I want to sleep, to sleep for ever. I have torn rag by rag from my breast

this revolution to which I gave all the faith that was in me. . . . Perhaps it is against the principles of Marxism, but I believe it is better to make one's entrance to the next world in clean linen. . . . Writers have to rummage so much among dirty linen that I feel I must, if only for once, wash myself of all this filth.

Before the still open tombs of these victims of Bolshevism the revolutionary clowns continue none the less their blasphemies and their capers.

Rise, rise toward the stars. . . .
You will not find there
Advances on your work, nor pubs.
Surely if you have ink within your reach
You'll not have any need
To lacerate your veins.
And why, indeed, make one more suicide ?
Is it not better sense to make more ink ?

Such was the wreath laid by Mayakoffsky on Essenin's coffin. Bezymensky gives voice to the same optimism in his poem inspired by the epidemic of suicides among the young Communists. His funeral oration ends with this clarion note: "The party survives its dead; that is enough for me. . . ."

It survives, no doubt, but in the desolation of a cemetery, like a grave-digger who juggles with the skulls of poets and thrusts ever deeper under the earth the last autumn flowers of Russian poetry.

PART III

RED MORALS

Chapter One

CLASS MORALITY

THE great leaders of Bolshevism have always been very much preoccupied with the idea of establishing a proletarian code of morals, and fixing its foundations and its laws. The reasons for this are, in the first place, theoretical. As a universal dogma, containing a religion, a science, a political theory, and a philosophy of art, all conceived in terms of class, Communism is bound to work out an ethical system that will fit into the general structure of its doctrine. There are also practical reasons, for a revolutionary dogma is useless unless it can be translated into action, even into direct action. Hence the necessity of governing the conduct of its disciples in strict conformity with the end they are pursuing—viz., the destruction of the *bourgeois* class.[1]

'Pure reason' and 'political reason' thus unite to determine the nature of proletarian morality. As with science, politics, and art under Communism, this morality will be a class morality. In a discussion on morals, which appeared in *Izvestia* on January 15, 1925, Lunacharsky declared:

> The only really Marxian method or, in other words, the only right one, consists in recognizing that morality is a

[1] Soltz, "Report on the Ethics of the Party" (*Pravda*, November 6, 1924).

> simple product of class interests. . . . All for a class; that is the only basis for proletarian morals. The good is that which contributes to class victory; the evil is that which leads to class defeat.

In short, the Bolshevik terminology reduces itself to the celebrated aphorism which Chaadaeff, the spiritual father of all the Russian aberrations, scratched with his nails dipped in blood on the flagstones of his fortress: "That is moral which speeds on the Revolution, and that is immoral which delays it."

Such a system cuts itself off from all previous systems by its complete lack of universality. The only proper subject of moral obligations is held to be the class or the Revolution, and, as long as there are more classes than one, the two terms remain synonymous. To judge the morality of an act of whatever kind a Communist must apply the supreme criterion: that of the advantage the proletarian cause can draw from it. "We do not condemn drunkenness for example," thunders Comrade Soltz, "for the same reasons as the temperance party. We do not denounce it as a sin, but we say: 'The abuse of alcohol weakens will, and the Revolution needs energetic fighters.'"

It follows that, after the example of the most 'capitalistic' philosophies, proletarian ethics rests on a postulate: the identity of the moral ideal with the achievement of proletarian dictatorship. "The proletariat," Lunacharsky hastens to explain, "is the advance-guard of humanity; its mission is to assure the happiness of humanity; and in proletarian ethics the interests of humanity combine with the interests of the

class." Communist dogma thus recognizes implicitly that a morality which is not universal in its scope cannot be a true morality, but it postpones this generalization until the final triumph of the proletariat shall have wiped out all social differences. In other words, Bolshevik morality will not shed its class character until it has destroyed the enemy class. The Communists will cheerfully become Kantians when the five continents form one great world-wide Soviet Republic.

Until then the Communist code will limit its 'categorical imperative' to the frontiers of class, and there is no doubt that, regarded as a practical system which completely sacrifices the individual for the realization of a collective and far-off ideal, it sometimes takes on an ascetic and mystical character. The best illustration is to be found in the fierce sectarianism of Lenin. Even under this superior and almost realistic form, however, proletarian morality is developed on a basis of revolting immorality. "All for the class!" Transferred to the plane of practical realities, this formula means that a Communist has no duties to a *bourgeois*, and a *bourgeois* has no rights against a Communist. Communist morals, in short, consist in having no morals where the *bourgeoisie* is concerned.

Under these conditions a Communist is naturally elevated to the rank of a superman, a hierarchy which has the sanction of the law in the form of a distinction between convicted prisoners according as they are of proletarian or of *bourgeois* extraction. Membership of the chosen class is a guarantee against excessively heavy penalties, and it is hardly surprising that it is also

an encouragement to the most extreme licence. The proletariat is an end in itself, so who can wonder if its members find an unchallengeable finality in the rapid and turbulent satisfaction of their appetites? Class morality is a school of the most frightful perversion.

This perversion, it must be added, is justified by the gross materialism which enjoys in Russia the dignity of a State religion. Popular Darwinism, which is the foundation of the official philosophy, reduces morality to the level of imitations of the lower animals. The famous Marxian dialectic is identified with 'the argument from nature.' Even revolutionary Marxianism itself is stamped with the basest materialism. If good and evil belong to the realm of economics, perfection can hardly be a question of the moral order. The basest turpitudes will blend very well with revolutionary 'virtue.' Let us return to the aphorisms of the Master: "It is forbidden to judge Communists according to the mean standards of the *bourgeois* morals. . . . A good-for-nothing may be useful to us precisely because he is a good-for-nothing."

Communists, therefore, are at liberty to trample on the dictates of *bourgeois* morality provided they remain themselves revolutionary instruments in the hands of the Communist Party, which thus becomes the moral arbiter of its adherents. To the various titles of the proletarian dictatorship we must add those of mentor, of censor, and of chief usher. And, as the Communist Party is for all practical purposes in Russia the State, Communist morals meet the same fate as that reserved

by Leninism for philosophy, morality, and science: it becomes a police matter. The various committees, sections, and cells interfere brutally with the private lives of their members, and drag out in detail their most intimate secrets.

"Socialism," according to Lenin once more, "is in the last resort nothing but statistics." To make the best use of the material at its disposal—whether the machinery be industrial or human—the proletarian dictatorship has to make an inventory of its resources and carefully record their condition. The *Krasnaya Gazeta*, semi-official organ of the Red General Staff, published, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, in its issues of April 15 and May 30, 1925, the results of a 'moral inspection' carried out by the Pur, the political department of the army. The officers had to fill in forms which contained these questions: "Have you any mistresses? Do you consort with prostitutes? Have you any unnatural vices?" On the last point the Pur does not spare us some disgusting details. In the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (No. 295), the official publication of the Association of Communist Youth, there is an equally enlightening document. The Kazan section of the Komsomol ordered a 'sexual inquiry,' and among the indiscretions of the questionnaire appeared this suggestive item, intended for young girls: "Say with how many citizens you have had sexual relations." The same inquiry was made at Riazan (*Pravda*, April 8, 1927), where it was carried out by the medical officer of the Technical High School, which has among its pupils young lads and girls of sixteen:

Are you living a sexual life? If not, say why. How long have you been indulging your sex? How often do you perform the sexual act? Are you sexually satisfied? Would you prefer a long-term sexual union or a series of temporary *liaisons*?

These 'sexual inquiries' indeed, according to the Soviet Press, are commonly held in all the great Communist cells. The 'eye of Moscow,' omnipresent and omniscient, spies out even the alcoves. It is especially of great importance for the Central Committee of the Third International to know if a member of the party "satisfies his sexual needs"—to use the language in which Bolshevism speaks of love—with a recognized Communist or with "a woman not belonging to any political party." Some theorists of Leninism have gone still further. Comrade Zalkind, author of two books —*Sexual Fetishism* and *The Sexual Problem from the Soviet Point of View*—protests vehemently against any romance between class enemies. "Inclination," she says, "toward an object [*sic*] belonging to an enemy class is an anomaly as monstrous as an attraction between a human being and a crocodile or an orang-outang." To keep track of these zoological heresies most of the 'sexual inquiries' contain the following question: "Do you satisfy your sexual desires with a Communist, a prostitute, or a woman of no political party?"

Where we should see the curiosity of mad sadists Communism sees only a calm sort of scientific Marxism. It stirs up the mud with a pedantic snobbery and searches the gutter with the proud consciousness of 'building up socialism.' Through the mouth of Comrade Zalkind it declares solemnly that "the manner in which the

sexual resources of the citizens are expended cannot be a matter of indifference to the proletariat; the most rigorous control is absolutely necessary."

That supervision exists and is one of the functions of the administration, acting in this instance through the K.K., or Committee of Control, which is a sort of moral Cheka. The K.K. judges in the last resort the conduct of members of the 'ruling party.' It can try at its bar any matter in which a revolutionary interest can be shown to be involved. As a direct emanation from the party the K.K. is, of course, infallible. It is the guardian of class morals as the Vapp is the guardian of proletarian literature, the Glavnauka of scientific orthodoxy, and the Ogpu of Communist law and order.

There is a whole system of tribunes subordinate to the K.K., who share with it the right to wash dirty linen in public. There is not a Communist section to-day without its Commission of Morals (*Bytovaya Kommissia*). Police, prosecutors, and judges at once, these provincial K.K.'s usually proceed to the 'purging of proletarian households'—operations which may result in ordering the divorce of Communists whose wives remain outside the party. Some K.K.'s even demand of every 'class-conscious' proletarian, in addition to the regularly ordered inquiries, detailed reports on matters which in countries still sunk in *bourgeois* darkness are regarded as the last to be talked about.

Refusal to allow the party into the recesses of private life is tantamount to an act of grave indiscipline. This was the decision of the Association of Communist Youth in the case of a certain Comrade Rutkoffskaya,

who resorted to an abortion without having first notified the sovereign party: "Public censure, with insertion in the newspapers, exclusion from the Komsomol for two years, and an order to extend his knowledge in matters of matrimonial hygiene." Comrade Rutkoffskaya's crime was not to have suppressed a life in embryo, but to have treated an operation authorized by the law as though it were "a personal matter."

Thus the more scrupulous comrades, for fear of being thought schismatic, resign themselves to living in glass-houses. There are some who do not hesitate to question the chiefs of their cells on the right to practise the most disgusting vices. Others keep the party faithfully informed of the way they pass their nights, while some even prefer to send their reports to the police—a proceeding which cannot be considered illogical in a country whose morality proceeds from the police, and where the police is the principal attribute of the party. "I hasten to inform you," wrote a particularly zealous Communist to the Chief Constable of his district, "that I had relations with my wife at midnight; as far as I am concerned, I hope to have a son." [1]

The first effect of 'nationalized' morality of this kind is, of course, to destroy the family. A glass-house cannot be a home; it can be occupied only by a Communist 'cell.'

[1] *Izvestia*, January 8, 1925.

Chapter Two

FATHERS AND SONS

THE family, indeed, as the learned professors of Bolshevism understand it, is nothing but a Communist 'cell.' Comrade Soltz, whose report has been already quoted, defines it in so many words as "the model of a small cell, whose function is to co-operate in the realization of Communism." The definition fits perfectly into the system. There is only one criterion—usefulness to the Revolution; only one duty—to work for the triumph of the Revolution. By this test alone are the relations between different members of the family to be judged, just as it is the only criterion to be applied to the relations between citizens. Class relationship counts for more than the ties of blood in determining social precedence and duties. And just as an enemy of the class cannot be admitted to a Communist group, so he must not expect to gain admission to a Red family. A disciple of Bukharin, who had married a *bourgeoise*, and—even worse!—had led her to the altar, defended himself on oath before his committee on the ground that his crime was only apparent. His real object had been to spy on the counter-revolutionaries!

Here again we have to admit the unbending character of Communist logic. If the Soviets have permitted the family to exist at all, even as a Communist 'cell,' it is simply because the Bolshevik State is not strong

enough to take over the children and replace the parents. Collective ownership of children remains a part of the programme of 100-per-cent. Leninism. The State, as the source of all truth and of all power, has the sole right, in theory, to prepare the new generations for the final struggle. Until that task has been fulfilled the parents exercise their authority as delegates of the State and on sufferance.

Even in Russia truth is sometimes heard out of the mouths of babes. Squalling processions of grimacing young monkeys, waving their little red flags, make their way along the streets throughout the length and breadth of the land. Little lips already blighted emit ear-splitting sounds, and proclaim to the world the degrading couplets of the *March of the Pioneers*, that *Internationale* of Red childhood:

> The Communist Party is our Father,
> The Communist Party is our Mother,
> *Boom! Boom!*

and so on. This couplet of the young street arabs deserves to be read, reread, and meditated. For the physical link Bolshevism has substituted tne only tie that has any value in its eyes, that of adhesion to the Communist Party. The Central Committee has to bring a new humanity to birth, and upon Lunacharsky falls the task of presiding over this monstrous accouchement. "We shall succeed in remodelling childhood," cries the official organ of the Commissariat of Education.[1] "We shall draw from it our Communist advance-guard." The programme is well under way. Already debauched

[1] *Narodnoy Prosveachenie*, No. 1, 1925.

ruffians, given over to drug-taking and loafing, march at the head of 800,000 pioneers. These gaol-birds are the acknowledged masters of Russia's childhood; they direct the atheistic propaganda, edit newspapers like *The New Robinson*, *The Pioneers' Pravda*, *The Young Builders*, whose pages are bespattered with diatribes against parents and demands for the extermination of the *bourgeoisie*. "We must have," declared the 6th Congress of Communist Youth, "pioneers in every street, in every house, in every shanty." According to an order of the Central Committee (*Izvestia*, August 4, 1924), the pioneers, in their turn, are expected even to form groups of 'Octoberized' babies in order to feed them from the Red feeding-bottle of the Third International. In a transport of inspired delirium Bukharin announced the production in series of these Communist Adams: "We have cast down the idols from their thrones, we have opened the doors to science, we are creating men!" And at the call of this Lunatic-in-Chief the Bolshevik frogs blow themselves out with pride and croak on the desecrated altars. The elementary school challenges God!

In his dramatic story *Fathers and Sons* Turgenev describes the anarchy which made a veritable babel of the Russian family when Nihilism was rampant among the youth of Russia. Fathers did not understand their sons, nor sons their fathers. Since then Nihilism has lost itself in Marxism and Marxism in Bolshevism, but the anarchy continues to-day as yesterday, and if Turgenev were still alive he could rewrite his story. For *Fathers and Sons* he would have to substitute *Sons*

versus Fathers, a monstrous antagonism, but one which has become almost a normal occurrence in a country where the strength of an idea is in direct proportion to its subversive character. The whole moral history of modern Russia is nothing but a "Hundred Years War" undertaken by sons against their fathers.

The sons have won, and Bolshevism is simply collective parricide. 'Obscurantist and retrograde' parents are linked with counter-revolutionaries as class enemies, and it is an elementary duty of citizenship to denounce them to the Ogpu. From the classroom the little ones spy on their fathers and their mothers on the plea of 'teacher's orders.' The favourite subjects for composition, especially after the holidays, consist in a description of what the families of the pupils think about the Soviet *régime*. Funtikoff, the well-known social revolutionary, lost his life as a consequence of these literary exercises. He was shot at Baku some time ago on the evidence of his daughter, a model civil servant and 'class-conscious' member of the Komsomol.

Let us turn, as always, to Bolshevik sources. The issue of *Pravda* for April 21, 1925, dwelt complacently on the precocious Leninism of a young 'pioneer,' who had the idea of publishing a journal he had kept concerning the doings and sentiments of his family, not omitting, of course, according to precepts of the Cheka, to send a copy to the offices of the Communist papers. "My brother," wrote this embryo Bukharin,

> is a non-party man, under-developed intellectually, and, moreover, he is too comfortably off to be accepted in the ranks of the pioneers. . . . My sister, on the other hand, cuts a con-

siderable figure among the pioneers, but she is a living example of political degeneracy; she still cherishes the dolls of the old order, and on top of all this she embroiders and cross-stitches various fal-lals of *bourgeois* luxury. . . . My parents, formerly two hydras of the counter-revolution, have had to bow to the demands of the new order; they no longer smoke the opium of religion, they have sold their engagement rings. . . . My father, however, retains some of the outworn phrases of the rotten old system. . . . He often acts illegally from the revolutionary point of view.

Pravda cannot contain its satisfaction:

We are far from the classical pictures of the old days with the family gathered round the lamp-shade, the father deep in his newspaper and the mother in her household accounts, while the children in little lace collars work out puzzles illustrating the rewards of virtue, and the old servant lights the candles before the icons.

Pravda is only too right; Communism is justified of her children!

"Please take prompt measures against my father," writes a young Communist dignitary to his village Soviet. "He is a blackguard, an idiot. He ought to have his silly mouth muzzled. . . . He does not appreciate the dignity of my position; he forgets that he is in the U.S.S.R., and imagines he is in America or in England. . . ." The lines which follow are so outrageous that the most euphemistic paraphrases which conveyed their meaning would be inadmissible. In conclusion the son declares that the best his father deserves is to clear out the refuse-bins, and he asks the Soviet to hand over this honourable task to an old fogey

sunk in the ideas of another age. As the Soviet—a gang of Kulaks, or "rich peasants"!—declined to respond to this demonstration of filial piety, the son, more and more conscientious, sent a copy of his letter to one of the principal agents of the Ogpu, Comrade Sosnoffsky, who hastened to publish it in *Pravda*, with this savoury comment: "We have here a document destined to have a place in all future anthologies of Socialism, a document which will be carefully tabled by historians and psychologists."

Alas! It does not stand alone. Here are some more, all equally representative and of an unchallengeable authenticity. The reporter of the *Krasnaya Gazeta* describes a scene at the bar of Revolutionary Justice in Petrograd. Summoned for refusing to maintain his disabled mother, a member of the Communist Party entered a counter-claim.

"I accuse my ex-mother [*sic*] of having seriously insulted me, and I ask the court to lock her up as a dangerous person."

A poor old woman sobs bitterly: "I brought you into the world and fed you at the price of my own hunger. . . . I have only been your ex-mother since yesterday, since you have drawn a big salary."

"Citizeness Andreeffa," replies the 'son,' "let us have no sentimentalism, and not so much familiarity. You are my ex-mother and no more. . . . Your imprisonment is the only thing that will save society from the danger that you represent. . . . What right have you to come worrying me, even in my office?"

Fresh sobs are heard. "You turned me out of doors;

you even came downstairs and said to the porter: 'Kick out that *apache* and tell her not to dare to come back.' . . . Am I not right in calling you an ungrateful son?"

The son shrugs his shoulders icily. "Comrade Judges, I insist on the imprisonment of my ex-mother. . . . I ask you to take away from her the status she usurps, and to relieve me of all filial duty."

This 'son' was right. Is not his real mother "the Feminine Section of Soviets"? Was not the Trotsky Prize awarded in 1925, in a French Communist nursery, to an urchin who added to his own name, Dudule, that of Zinovieff, and who spat in his mother's face because she gave expression to counter-revolutionary sentiments?

That spit in the face was not a mere incident; it was profoundly enlightening. Since paternity is only a physiological sport, a mother is no more than a highly developed mechanical incubator, with neither rights nor duties. At most, if the incubator is of proletarian origin its rights and duties are those which flow from Communist solidarity. A procreating machine, a milk-supplying machine, has no special claim to a particular affection, or, when it falls into human weaknesses, to the veil that covered the shame of Noah. The more rotten the branches of their family tree, the greater the sadistic joy of the pure-blooded Communists in stripping them bare in public. "I am the son of a prostitute," proclaims the hero of a fashionable novelist, Madame Seiffulina; and it is not only in novels that we encounter such declarations. Like the little winner of the Trotsky Prize,

the high dignitaries of the Kremlin do not hesitate to spit in the faces of their mothers.

In *The Press and the Revolution*,[1] a publication of the Communist Academy, Comrade Voitolobsky devotes a dithyrambic article to Demian Bedny, the famous "Cavalier of Letters." It is a literary study which is also biographical, and some of the pages abound in information about the poet's mother, "a hideous village prostitute," a veritable incarnation of "Stinking Elizabeth" in *The Brothers Karamazoff*. The train-bearer of Demian Bedny observes that

> Catherine Kuzminichna was not only a drunkard, but also an accomplished thief; she robbed her own son of a fur hat. She was also a well-known abortionist, her treatment consisting of a syrup with a saltpetre base. . . . In the end she got very near murder: it was at her instigation that her two lovers killed Demian Bedny's father and threw his body in a manure-pit.

And here is the chief pearl of the recital:

> Effimka [for Demian Bedny's real name was Effim] had just turned four years. His eyes, brimming as usual with tears and his body lacerated with stripes, he walked along behind his mother. . . . With her he went into the grocer's. He hid himself in a corner, where he took part in a shameful scene on some bags which had fallen down. . . . Effimka burst into tears, and his mother threw herself on the boy with heavy strokes of the birch.

Now, who could have told the author about this childish experience if not Demian Bedny himself? Beside the

[1] No. 4 of 1926.

Communist *trouvère*, Dostoieffsky's Smerdiakoff, son of "Stinking Elizabeth," becomes a cherub!

Now let us push the consequences of the nightmare to its extreme limits. The family nucleus of Communism goes back beyond the prehistoric cave, where the male was already husband and father. The Soviet *régime* permits no monopoly except in foreign trade. Where paternity is concerned it recognizes only 'collective children.' Frequently two Communists will hand over to the charge of an asylum the product of their 'sexual co-operation.' "We have had simultaneous relations with the mother of this child," they declare, "and are therefore both its fathers."[1] Where is the absurdity? Is not the party, the true father of every Communist, itself a plurality? The call of the blood is a vain thing fondly imagined by *bourgeois* individualism, a physiological heresy to serve the purpose of apologists for capitalist ideas.

We can now readily understand the absence of incest from the list of crimes enumerated by the new penal code. The courts have frequently to hear claims for maintenance by sisters seduced by their brothers. The judges award or withhold the reward of infamy; that is all. They are not concerned with the degree of relationship between plaintiff and defendant; it is not their business to identify the blood that runs in their veins. Incest is simply 'a sexual act.'

[1] *Pravda*, May 7, 1923.

Chapter Three

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

WHEN we consider what monsters the Soviet *régime* has brought into existence it is not altogether surprising that mothers should resort to violent means to avoid giving birth to Socialist Smerdiakoffs. It is in accordance with the general topsy-turvydom of the system that the same legislation which refuses the mother any rights whatever over her children invests her with the permission to strangle them before birth. According to the decree of November 20, 1920, confirmed by Article 146 of the Code, it is sufficient for a citizeness to plead the expense of bringing up a family or the state of her health in order to obtain permission for a surgical assassination. Generally it will be quite sufficient if she can show that she is a loyal Communist, in other words a superwoman. The instrument of the quack surgeon may, it is true, prevent the birth of some scrofulous starvelings, but it may also kill a new Lenin in the womb. Never has a more amazing power been given to the individual by a doctrine which reduces the individual to an historical accident.

The contradiction, however, is more apparent than real. We should be grateful to a certain Comrade Gurboff, who, in the official journal of the Moscow Soviet,[1] interpreted the decree of 1920 as essentially a

[1] *News of the Administrative Section of the Moscow Soviet*, No. 17, 1923.

provisional measure imposed by the State on account of the necessity of restraining for a time the increase of population. This article, in fact, had the considerable merit of greatly upsetting the paragons of Communism, and led *Pravda* to discuss in detail, as crudely as anyone could wish, this most delicate of subjects. "Women's rights! We should say so!" sneers this journal.[1]

> The old scholastic philosophers used to discuss whether the human embryo had a separate existence or formed a part of the maternal organism. We materialists are not concerned with nonsense of that kind. The truth lies in quite another direction. . . . How can we be expected to encourage births when, year in and year out, we bury two million babies? Such a propaganda would display a *bourgeois* confidence in the force of ideas, but life is not ruled by ideas. . . . The only propaganda that can be permitted is one calling attention to the dangers which operations for abortion involve to the health of the woman. . . . But the day will come when sexual life will be rationalized and man will be master of nature. . . . Meanwhile we have to see to it that certain procedures are made as little harmful as possible.[2]

If these somewhat enigmatic phrases are carefully examined we arrive at something like this. The State, unable to nationalize children, displays a very large tolerance for the moment toward the suppression of potential Communists; when the community has reached its full perfection, however, and the State has a monopoly of everything, the Soviets will rationalize

[1] March 10, 1923.

[2] It is to be noted that certain administrations (particularly in the hospitals) require an undertaking from employees not to become pregnant. If they do, a resort to abortion is compulsory (*Izvestia*, October 21, 1928).

the rhythm of births by the aid of scientific means which will conquer the risks and the pain. The State, through the good offices of its administrative representatives, will give permission to destroy the potential life and the gynæcologists, 'masters of nature,' will empty a uterus with the same facility as a dentist now extracts a milk-tooth. Until that golden age arrives there is nothing for it but to improve the technique of abortion.

Under the existing Soviet rules the capital punishment of a fœtus is legal only if the executioner is a State doctor and the gallows takes the form of an operating-table in a clinic under the Commissariat of Public Health. The efforts of the Communist Government are not directed to reducing the number of operations carried out in Russia, but to standardizing them according to the most modern sanitary methods. In the co-operative societies, the State shops, the women's clubs, and on the factory walls there are violently coloured posters representing the different stages in the development of pregnancy and indicating the suitable moment for surgical intervention. Underneath these pictures there are pathetic appeals to peasant women to trust themselves exclusively to the advice of the official doctors and to have nothing to do with quacks, palmists, and clairvoyants, "the refuse of the capitalist *régime*." There are even more offensive representations on these posters. "Not a trace of sentimentality or of maudlin morality," *Pravda* claims triumphantly, in its issue of December 10, 1924. "A hygienic and social film . . . all the dangers of going to ignorant midwives and all the advantages of legally executed operations

are displayed before the eyes of the greatly edified spectators."

The first effect of this propaganda is to make a normal occurrence, to be spoken of quite openly, of operations which ordinarily are only mentioned under the breath. According to the *Rabochaya Gazeta* (*Workman's Gazette*), dialogues of this kind may be heard any day between masters and pupils in the classrooms:

"I want permission to go out."

"Where are you going?"

"To the infirmary."

"Are you going for an abortion?"

In this almost incredible question there is no intention of obscenity; it is asked in the same matter-of-fact way in which outside the Red territory a teacher might inquire about a cold in the head or an attack of toothache.

Certain Russian writers, Semidovitch and Gorodetsky, have described for us the sinister anterooms of the Soviet maternity centres—centres in which women unlearn the vocation of motherhood. There you will find rickety working women, stumpy peasants, prostitutes, semi-*bourgeoise*, the unsavoury products of the N.E.P., all the representative types of the Soviet Eve. Youth dominates everything. There are typists from the Government departments, students from the workmen's faculties, the trembling advance-guard of Bolshevism, rotten to the bone. Some are there for the third or fourth time. With the proud consciousness of superiority they encourage the novices and make fun of the shy, chattering all the time like magpies. Confidences are exchanged on the romances of which the anteroom

of this hospital represents the final scene. Gorodetsky reports some incredible snatches of conversation from these gatherings.

"Do you expect a bitch to remember which dog it was? . . . One child is one too many . . . my mother had sixteen; it was only under the old *régime* that such horrors were possible."

All these things are said in the most natural tone imaginable, so complete is the moral anæsthesia of the place. Sometimes a visit ends up with an attack of hysteria, and a flood of complaints against the doctors because the commission charged with this infanticide has decided that it is too late for a 'legal operation.'

All that remains, then, is to visit one of the charlatans, who will prescribe some infernal mixture for the unfortunate woman or operate on her with rusty instruments. There is no more common news item in the land of the Soviets than the discovery of a horribly mutilated female body in one of the suburbs. Most often the inquiries prove fruitless, but sometimes the Ogpu discovers the disorderly house in which the unknown woman has handed herself over to a gynæcological assassin. Some of these clandestine 'specialists' are so overworked that they do not give their patients time to take off their furs or their overcoats. Having pocketed the roubles or jewellery—very often an engagement ring—they lay their horror-stricken victims on an operating-table without any antiseptic preparations, not even the *bourgeois* prejudice in favour of boiled water or the pre-Revolutionary luxury of sterilized instruments. This is the picture presented by *Pravda* of March 3, 1927,

and it is a terrifying one if we remember that at the lowest estimate, according to the statistics of Professor Okuchitz, published in the *Krasnaya Gazeta*, the number of fraudulent operations exceeds by 100 per cent. those of the duly authorized ones.

Russia is one great hospital of abortions; through the good offices of its medical Cheka the Red Terror is extended even to uterine life. The number of abortions in Petrograd rose from 6700 in 1924 to 16,000 in 1925, a figure which represents 42 per cent. of the total number of births. In 1926 there was a further increase: 19,235 applications and 17,053 authorizations. In 1927 the rise was even sharper: 14,186 applications and 11,722 permissions in the first half-year. At Moscow the service for the protection of mothers and children—the reader will not miss the poignant irony of the word 'protection' here—suppressed about 1000 potential human lives per month, and the various hospitals were able to boast of an equally rich harvest. The country, still too much affected by *bourgeois* prejudice, falls somewhat behind the benefits of urban civilization. Out of 100 village pregnancies statistics show that only a dozen are artificially 'liquidated.' But from year to year that proportion is increased. The abortionist propaganda of Comrade Semashko, veterinary surgeon under the old *régime* and Commissar of Public Health under the new, makes recruits by thousands in the ranks of the peasants. On the hedges in the most distant of hamlets the well-known placards decorated with anatomical diagrams explain to mothers how they may legally practise Communist Malthusianism.

In many villages, according to *Pravda* of January 31, 1926, the peasants convoked the rural Soviet to put an end to "a scandal unknown to their fathers." The gentler sex, however, stood firm against the assaults of the 'obscurantists.' "You would tell another story if you had to bring the children into the world," screamed the peasant-women delegates in chorus, and the controversy in more than one Soviet ended, under the amused gaze of a plaster cast of Lenin, with a brisk pulling of hair and beards.

"A woman among us is done for at twenty-five," admits Comrade Gnipova in *Izvestia* of November 17, 1926, "and the reason for the physical collapse is to be found above all in the epidemic of abortions." In order to avoid these injurious results the Norwegian Communist women have worthily completed the doctrine of their Muscovite mentors. At the Oslo Congress in 1924 they voted on the proposition of the woman doctor, Tove Mohl, in favour of giving permission to women incapable of raising their children to "legally assassinate" babies in the first twenty-four hours after birth. The disciples have improved on the masters!

Chapter Four

"DE FACTO" MARRIAGE

THE Pan-Russian Soviet Congress in 1926 ratified the new matrimonial code; the Red family has at last achieved a legal status. It is an essentially provisional status, however. Comrade Kursky, People's Commissary of Law, has taken care to make it clear that this new legislation must be regarded as simply a beginning of the full Communist Law. To his keen regret the Government has not been able to make a clean sweep of the *bourgeois* ideas with which the Russian population is still permeated; it has been condemned to the sad necessity of erecting its matrimonial code on such a "wretched institution" as the family. And Comrade Kursky makes his humble apologies for this weakness. "For us Communists," he says, "the *régime* of the future presents itself in a totally different light: a truly Communist law will have for its basis not the control of marriage but the collective education of children by the State." [1] "That is a still distant conquest," admits Comrade Wassilieff-Jujin in *Pravda* of March 6, 1926. "We have not even sufficient schools to teach the alphabet to all our children nor enough *crèches* and hospitals to shelter the millions of little abandoned brats, nor public dining-rooms to take the place of the family table." Thus the State is obliged to maintain marriage

[1] *Izvestia*, No. 265, 1926.

as long as it is unable to provide centres of child-training and Socialist dormitories and restaurants. Marriage remains, therefore, an evil which cannot be got rid of but is already appreciably reduced!

In his principal report to the Congress Comrade Kursky proudly enumerates the blows delivered by the Soviet hammer at this outworn institution. The Code of 1918 had already consolidated a whole series of revolutionary victories, such as the destruction of marital authority, the abolition of religious marriage, the separation of estates, the monopoly of education in the hands of the State, and, above all, the simplification of divorce, a simplification which goes even beyond the principle of divorce by mutual consent, and provides that the Communist household may be broken up at the will of one of the parties. In all this the Soviet legislator claims that he has simply brought the laws into conformity with the realities. The family, he declares, is breaking up under our eyes, and the surplus feminine population—2,500,000 "unoccupied" women—has speeded up the inevitable dissolution by the unexpected agency of a considerable "sexual rivalry." [1]

Important as were the reforms of 1918, however, they still bore intolerable traces of capitalist jurisprudence, such as the necessity of registering a marriage before the public authorities. The new code no longer demands this formality as a *sine qua non* of a legally recognized marriage. It will recognize the union of any citizen of eighteen years and any citizeness of sixteen who form an

[1] Boldyreff's report in *Izvestia* of December 8, 1925. See also *The Family and Marriage in the Past and the Present*, with a preface by N. Semashko (Moscow, 1925).

alliance on a basis of free love. It accepts as evidence of marriage, cohabitation, oral or written testimony, "co-operation of an economic character" between the two parties, joint care of children, and the acquisition of goods during the period of conjugal relations. There is, however, the paradoxical fact, which can only be explained by the violent opposition of the peasants to the latest matrimonial innovations, that a registered marriage confers more extensive rights on the parties than a simple *de facto* marriage. Thus, whereas both forms of marriage carry with them the right to alimony, only a registered marriage confers the right to certain exemptions from military service and the privilege of voting by women in the towns.

Once more Comrade Kursky apologizes for this concession to the retrograde spirit which haunts an unfortunate population barely emerged from the "feudal limbo" of Tsarism! "The time will come, I am convinced," he cries, "when registration will be abolished without possibility of return, or reduced to a simple statistical formality."

Until the arrival of that golden age, however, it is necessary to accept a compromise between the factory and the village and to reconcile the "rustic prejudices" with the aspirations of the workman, who is the true torch-bearer of Communism. *Pravda* of January 13, 1926, published the resolutions carried in the country at meetings of peasants on the subject of the matrimonial code:

> Marriage is not a toy to be made one day and broken the next. . . . The peasant class cannot recognize at root anything

but a religious marriage: it accepts the registered marriage as a last resort, and repudiates *de facto* marriage as a great wrong. . . . Divorce is a source of conflicts and hatred, of revenge and murder. Registration cannot be suppressed. . . . We refuse to marry as we would buy a cow. Unless marriages are registered the country will be swamped in vice.

Before this flood of resolutions, each more severe than the last, Comrade Krylenko, Procurator-General of the Republic, sounds the rally to the Communist troops. "To arms! To arms! The *petit bourgeoisie* has left its trenches and is making the assault!" But it is not only the *petit bourgeoisie* that is among the assailants. Side by side with the 'class enemy' march some of the veterans of the Leninist old guard, such as Soltz and Riazanoff. "The State," declares the former in an open Congress of the Soviets, "must demand of every citizen that he shall register his marriage. . . . That is the only way in which we can protect women." Comrade Riazanoff was still more vehement:

The institution of *de facto* marriage side by side with a duly registered system of marriage must result in the monstrous development of polygamy, a chaotic letting-loose of sexual instincts. The new Code is nothing but a juridical abortion.[1]

According to Comrade Ilinsky, one of the great Soviet jurists: "In the last resort it is the Don Juan of the streets who gains by the new legislation."[2] And Comrade Larin, another Leninist whose orthodoxy can hardly be questioned, declares that the working woman will be delivered up to all the lustful appetites of the

[1] *Izvestia*, November 17, 1926.
[2] *Krasnaya*, November, "Law and Morals."

employing class. With a cutting irony Larin has reduced to their proper proportions the various requirements laid down by the Code for the recognition of an unregistered marriage:

> A man takes a woman into a room in a hotel—that is enough to prove cohabitation. They dine together—that amounts to economic co-operation. The next day, when the gallant has bought a bottle of perfume or a powder-puff for his companion of a night, it is quite in order to talk of the acquisition of goods during the period of conjugal relations.[1]

But does the registered marriage offer any better guarantees when we remember that, to employ the expression of Ilinsky, "it is easier to get divorced in Russia than to take your name off the domiciliary register"? And according to another jurist, Kakitelashvili, a compatriot of Lenin, a divorce case takes only a quarter of an hour. A couple present themselves before an employee of the Zags—the euphonious diminutive of the institution which blesses and dissolves Soviet unions:

"Have you come for a divorce or a marriage?" inquires the clerk, the Communist parish priest, as he is familiarly called.

"For divorce."

"Good! No children?"

"No."

"Excellent. Mutual consent? That will be quite all right. Please sign the register. Divorce granted; you can go."

In these terms the Soviet journalist, Comrade Richter, describes in *Izvestia* the meagre formalities which

[1] *Izvestia*, November 16, 1926.

attend the breaking up of the home. In practice it requires five minutes to contract regular marriage and five minutes to regain liberty. Even in Russia, an Asiatic republic which has nothing American about it, the citizens try to live at top speed; even in Russia time is money. The *Krasnaya Gazeta* reports that a young wife just married demanded the salary for a day's work from her husband. Feeling sure that the matrimonial procedure would occupy several hours, she had obtained a day's leave from her occupation: a loss of two roubles twenty-five copecks. After vainly endeavouring to bring his wife to a more disinterested way of looking at the matter the husband paid up, but demanded divorce on the spot. Underneath the joyfully written signatures of the marriage, of which the ink had barely had time to dry, the parties signed the paragraph which put an end to their domestic happiness. The marriage had lasted ten minutes.

This no doubt is an exceptional case, but the possibility of such a thing happening within the limits of the law opens the door to an unlimited licence. In 1926 the Zags registered one divorce for every four marriages, in 1927 the proportion had already risen to two out of every four. The average length of conjugal life does not exceed eight months. Unions of one week are a common occurrence, and the number which last only forty-eight hours increases from month to month. In December 1927 the Moscow Zags counted forty-eight marriages dissolved the day after their celebration.

Registration prevents the citizen from keeping a harem legally, but, on the other hand, it gives him the

right to change his legitimate wife an indefinite number of times. He may be divorced and remarried as often as he has the time to present himself to the Zags; the law imposes no restriction on the number of divorces. Madame Gnipova reported to the Pan-Russian Soviet Congress (*Izvestia*, November 17, 1926) that she knew one Communist with her fifteenth husband. If, instead of registering her successive caprices, this Communist had preferred *de facto* marriage, would she not have been able to display fifteen husbands at once?

"We are fighting gloriously," declares Stoltz in the same number of *Izvestia*, "against polygamy in our Mussulman republics, and we have among ourselves more than one comrade with four wives." This, however, is a very modest figure. There are Bluebeards in the Red Republic with as many as 119 wives. *Pravda* of March 4, 1926, gives us the name of this Communist Pasha. He is Comrade Fotin, an excellent revolutionary.

And, indeed, why should not Comrade Fotin have 119, or even 200, wives? Invited to explain his matrimonial ardour to the Communist Committee of his section, the cheerful fellow pleaded the irresistible 'logic of his nature.' "I have sound limbs, I am young, and overflowing with energy." Another disciple of historical materialism, summoned before the tribunal of his cell and charged *inter alia* with having driven one of his companions to suicide, replied not without pride to his judges: "Will you be good enough to show me the law which prohibits a Communist from having several wives?" And, as Sosnoffsky records in *Pravda*, this declaration, far from causing any indignation among

the public, evoked enthusiastic applause. It is true that in the twenty-five volumes which compose the works of Lenin the most subtle interpreters are unable to discover a single text limiting the number of permissible pensioners in a Bolshevik gynæceum or stud-farm. One of the favourite subjects of discussion at Soviet meetings consists in an attempt to fix the maximum that Lenin or Karl Marx would have approved. After a turbulent meeting of working women at Kharkoff the following resolution was carried: "Appropriate influence should be brought to bear upon women who show a disposition to take more than three husbands." This modest figure has always been well exceeded in masculine ideas—and in current practice.

Chapter Five

THE RED SLAVE TRAFFIC

IN the first days of the Revolution, among the many processions, grotesque or tragic, that made their way through the streets of Petrograd, there were long lines of women, who marched along with a braying of the *Internationale* and a great waving of red flags. Side by side they marched, dishevelled *tricoteuses*, grimacing shrews, aggressive sluts, 'class-conscious and organized' prostitutes, but with them also compact masses of unhappy enthusiasts, led astray by the propaganda, their faces lighted up with the hope of the golden age. They tramped along the roads in step, all, without exception, animated by the sentiment that they were emancipated sisters. Immense placards bore such inscriptions as "The Revolution Has Emancipated Woman," "Down with the Tyranny of Marriage," "Free Love in a Free State," "Full Rights for the Working Woman."

Ten years have passed since these ecstasies, and we are now able to measure the ground which has been covered. It is to the Communist harem, to the slave-market that these new Eves of the Russian Revolution have attained. Feminism, under the Bolshevik *régime*, is swallowed up in a renewed slavery of the Eastern market. Of all the Soviet dramas there is none more lamentable than this degradation of woman, the sale to

the highest bidder of the Red Valkyries after a rapid ride through the country of mirages.

The train-bearers of Communism will protest indignantly, they will point to all the rights, all the privileges, conquered by revolutionary woman. Has she not her own separate International, her associations, clubs, meetings, and the right to resort with impunity to abortive manœuvres, even the hope of becoming, like Madame Kollontay, an ambassadress?

No doubt; but she is also liable to be sold for auction, and her favours may be the object of a loan contract. So far from free love, we have as consequence the right to treat women as cattle. *Izvestia* of January 26, 1926, informs us, with a great wealth of detail, about the matrimonial code adopted by the Soviet of Djokolo. *Fiancées* are sold for fifty roubles, if they are virgin, and for twenty-five roubles if they are widows. The code of Daghestan is more explicit. "A girl, excellent in all respects, costs 125 roubles in cash, plus her bedding in kind. The price of a widow or a young girl of low extraction—probably non-proletarian origin—may be fixed by mutual consent."

We shall be told that this happens in the Caucasus, where the population has not yet been able to assimilate the marrow of Leninist doctrine. We agree; but let us turn to the *Kommunist*, the principal organ of Kharkoff, which, on April 1, 1926, declared the sale of women to be a common occurrence in the Ukraine, and added that the Soviets recorded, without turning a hair, contracts of sale similar to those entered into for cows or for oats. Some husbands demand to be paid in roubles,

others are content with corn, agricultural implements, or sometimes simply with vodka. The *Kommunist* reports a contract duly signed by three witnesses in which the price of the woman sold was fixed at two litres of spirit. Here the local Soviet felt itself bound to question the validity of the sale, not because the operation itself was illegal, but because the goods—a vigorous and healthy woman—had been under-priced, and there was every evidence of an abuse of confidence.

The *Kommunist* adds that more than one document is unfit for publication, because of the excessively "zoological" [*sic*] character of its terms.

After the sale contracts we have the loan contracts, the letting out of Socialist flesh:

> I, the undersigned, Kowaleff, undertake to adopt Anna Romanenko and to treat her as my wife from the beginning of 1924. . . . I, the undersigned, Anna Romanenko, agree to become for three years the wife of the above-mentioned citizen. . . . I, the undersigned, Kowaleff, promise to take care of Anna Romanenko as my true wife for the space of three years. . . .

Such is the document, dated June 19, 1924, published by the Executive Committee of Dubroffka, of which students of matrimonial monstrosities will find a complete text in *Pravda* of March 3, 1925. It is not the only one. *Izvestia* of December 6, 1924, gave another sample contract, couched in even more explicit terms:

> I, the undersigned, Alexis Riaboff, present Marie Prostoserdowa with this receipt [*sic*] in confirmation of my Communist word of honour, by which I unite myself to the said Prostoserdowa. I undertake to conduct myself honestly, not to inflict

upon her any unmerited punishment, nor to cause her any harm by vices or their ultimate consequences, particularly venereal diseases. It is understood that I may be summoned to appear in court for any violation of these promises.

Six weeks later the Citizeness Prostoserdowa brought an action against Citizen Riaboff, who disappeared one fine day without leaving any address. She claimed thirty roubles for tea, sugar, and bread consumed by the fugitive, and fifteen roubles for the purchase of medicines, for reasons which may be guessed.

But here is a still more revolutionary contract. *Blasé*, as he may well have been where Soviet morality is concerned, the examining judge of the first district of Kharkoff must have raised his eyes when he read the following plea:

My wife, Maria Ivanovna Medvedenko, has entered into a private [*sic*] matrimonial contract with Citizen Eskin, manager of the Commercial Society of Moscow. . . . As I find it abnormal that my legitimate wife should simultaneously cohabit with me and the aforementioned Eskin, I feel myself compelled to put an end to our conjugal relations and to cede my wife, as a second wife, to Citizen Eskin, who already has one. . . .

There was attached to this appeal a copy of the 'private' agreement entered into between Eskin and Maria Ivanovna:

(1) As from the 26th instant, Maria Ivanovna agrees to fulfil righteously and faithfully her conjugal duties under all their aspects and in all their manifestations. (2) On this day, the 25th instant, Maria Ivanovna shall present herself at the Hôtel Métropole (Room No. 101) for the purpose . . .

but here begin clauses so 'zoological' that no paper which is not of Soviet manufacture could stand them. The duties incumbent upon Maria Ivanovna are defined under all their 'aspects,' in all their 'manifestations,' and, as it concerned the simplest thing in the world, the signatures of several witnesses were inscribed at the foot of this juridical pornography. The Bolshevik turtle-doves do not hesitate to put down in writing the future themes of their cooing.

In face of this epidemic of long- and short-term contracts, renewable like leases, and expressed with all the frankness of savages who have learned a little law, the Communist dignitaries finish by calling the attention of the Congress of Soviets to the "increasingly marked tendency to arrange sexual relations in the same manner as commercial relations." Here, indeed, is an unexpected discovery: in the full glory of proletarian dictatorship woman is simply an article of merchandise whose price follows the general law of supply and demand. Under a *régime* which flatters itself upon having established equality between the sexes, under a Government which claims the honour of having emancipated "our Chinese and Turkish sisters," the woman agricultural worker can find unemployment only on condition of placing herself absolutely at the disposal of her master!

After a very thorough inquiry Comrade Serafimovitch protests with a pathetic indignation against the morals practised in the Crimean plantations:

> The peasant girls have to sacrifice all shame in exchange for a crust of mouldy bread. They work like beasts of burden

minus the feeding-trough and the litter; then, the day's work finished, the employer is free to exercise his rights. The Red slaves go back to their villages, dishonoured and ruined, rendered insane often by savage methods to cover the traces of their downfall.[1]

And yet, Comrade Serafimovitch assures us, thousands and thousands of victims take the road to the Crimea every year and sign themselves on to feed on refuse in return for this infamous commerce. But is the Crimea an exception in the Communist Paradise? The conclusion of the Soviet journal is categorical: "Everywhere it is the same thing, everywhere. . . ."

The *Trud*, the spokesman of the professional unions, published on March 21, 1926, the terms of some contracts which illustrate this abominable truth: prudent and cunning men of affairs, the Bolshevik nigger-drivers excel in laying down in different formulas the class of service that they claim from their employees. One contract contemplates "night work" in the service of the employer; another obliges the workmen to deliver their wives as servants; a third dispenses with all finesse and imposes the duty to behave, during the whole term of the contract, as "good domestics and spouses."

Like the *Krasnaya Gazeta*, the *Trud* cannot find terms sufficiently scathing to stigmatize these ignominious agreements. But what could be more hypocritical than a sermon on virtue from the mouth of the professional apologists of bestiality? Between the abolition of the family and of marriage, which is the starting-point, and

[1] *Krasnaya Gazeta*, March 21, 1926.

the Bolshevization of women, which is the goal, Leninism stops midway; it hesitates between the clean sweep which has been accomplished and the ideas which are too daring to be successfully undertaken. Hence the compromise solutions of the new code which offend '*bourgeois* prejudices' without satisfying the aspirations of pure Communists, and hence also the anarchical solutions which are found on the confines of the legislation according to personal convenience and appetite. Pending the achievement of the Bolshevik commune, with its collective harem in which Communist ushers, acting for the communal procurer, supervises proletarian mating, women are already nationalized at a venture; future socializations are replaced by contractual arrangements in harmony with the usages and customs of a transitional period, that of the Nep. Sometimes the future is anticipated, and the community, represented by the rural Soviet, the executive committee, or the village assembly, is erected into the supreme arbiter of all the romances which come to birth within the territorial areas of these different institutions. "The sexual capital" of the citizens—to employ an expression dear to Comrade Zalkind—is part of the general patrimony of the workers and the poor peasants. Does not the administration of this fund, therefore, belong by right to the organs of proletarian dictatorship.

Izvestia of October 28, 1926, published a typical example of class interference in a love affair. A peasant of rather mature age, having decided to marry a widow from a neighbouring township, the high officials of the village considered that this 'sexual problem' ought to

be settled by referendum. Before all the united inhabitants the president of the rural Soviet enumerated the reasons against marriage. In the first place, there were economic reasons; the peasant was very well off, while the widow was poor. Then there were geographical considerations, the peasant and the widow being born in different localities. "The Soviet power," concluded the rustic Lenin, "cannot approve of such a policy." And the assembly, with perfect unanimity, not only forbade the counter-revolutionary to join himself in legitimate marriage to the object of his affections, but ordered him to satisfy his 'sexual needs,' since he still felt them at his age, with a peasant, named Arina, of his native village, the proprietress of a fine plot of land.

Chapter Six

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

WHAT do all these matrimonial eccentricities prove, if not that marriage, tolerated as a temporarily inevitable evil, is an institution which has outlived its usefulness in Communist society? At every moment, under the attack of the Red standard, the frail legal structure which still protects a 'capitalist prejudice' creaks and crumbles. At every moment realities hurl themselves against the few rights which the legislature still recognizes as belonging to an outworn institution. If we press our examination of the Bolshevik mentality to its limits we shall find that Bolshevism, with the unholy joy of a doctor who finds his diagnosis confirmed, will welcome the most nauseating forms of licence provided that they compromise marriage in the eyes of the proletariat. Incapable of overthrowing the citadel of the family, Bolshevism loosens its ancient stones, and opens the doors wide to the attack of unbridled sensuality. In the least quaking of the edifice on its undermined foundations it hypocritically proclaims the signs of an unavoidable catastrophe. Unavoidable, since Nature, Science, and Communism, the three substantial persons which compose the revolutionary trinity, condemn any *bourgeois* regulation of love. For the syllogism they substitute atomic mechanism, and for the categorical imperative the stammerings of instinct. The practical

consequences of such teaching are inevitable. "There is no such thing as love," declares Slepkoff, a prophet of the Communist advance-guard, in a volume entitled *Adolescence and Morals*, published at the expense of the State. There are only physiological phenomena. Now physiology knows nothing of shame, or of the sentimental complications which a *bourgeois* romanticism has engrafted on the mating of two mammals. It stands outside social conventions, legal rules, moral prohibitions, and religious catechisms. Bolshevism, founded on an exact knowledge of physiological laws, is very careful to avoid contradicting 'the logic of the glands and the nerves.' By its own principles it is bound to grant absolution to all acts of profligacy in the name of historical materialism.

The slightest allusion to the necessity of moderating the physiological urge is sufficient to incur a charge of being counter-revolutionary. Krasheninnikoff's novel *Chastity* provoked pitying smiles in the Moscow Press. *Pravda* declares:

> He is at least fifteen years out of date, this unhappy man who insists on encircling continence with a morbid halo and displays his repugnance toward an act so normal as the loss of virginity. . . . The author keeps himself out of gunfire of Communist truth. . . . What pioneer to-day would allow himself to be shocked by a daring bathing-dress?

It is forbidden to contradict the teachings of 'physiology.' Even down to Comrade Zalkind, one of the principal theorists of Marxized love, there is nobody who has not received the admonitions of *Pravda* for having ventured to recommend a little "economy in sexual

expenditure." Yet Comrade Zalkind could hardly be accused of having infringed the logic of nature in recommending to the working class to spare its generative forces. According to this excellent Communist, the proletariat ought to "maintain an intimate link with cosmic influences," and ought particularly to follow the rhythm of the seasons.

The Communist Party denounces this as a cloudy ontology, a milk-and-water philosophy, though one would imagine that considerations like these were sufficiently 'zoological' to satisfy anybody. In the opinion of Stoltz,

> To live is to manifest one's self completely. Otherwise one does not live, one simply exists. It is possible to exist for a hundred years without living a single day . . . and Bolsheviks must live; they must draw from life the maximum of enjoyment that it is capable of giving, provided they do not identify their pleasures with those of the *bourgeois* first-comer.

This Socialist epicureanism leads us straight to the consecration of sexual hysteria, euphemistically described as 'free love.' In this erotic Koran Lunacharsky is the Allah and Madame Kollontay the Mohammed in skirts. If the peasants—that is to say, the last relics of the Russian *bourgeoisie* in its agrarian form—are reconciled to marriage, to legalized monogamy, this retrograde state of affairs is to be explained by the crude capitalism in which the countryside is still submerged. In the country the family still has the value of a productive unit, and as long as agriculture is not industrialized, and the farm has not yet become a 'wheat manufactory,' peasant marriage can be justified by economic arguments and by utilitarian considerations. When, however, it

is a question of the town and of Socialist methods of production there is nothing to be said for these arguments. The State forges have no need, like the family plot of land, that the same man and the same woman should be condemned to share the same bed.

In her "Report on Marriage and Morals," which appeared in *Izvestia* on January 2, 1927, Madame Kollontay asks:

> What is the family? Two beings who have joined themselves one to the other, who have, in other terms, isolated themselves from the community. Have we any need of an intimate union of this kind? No, a thousand times no!

Thus all is of a piece, everything fits in to a system where even the relations between the sexes are regulated according to economic laws. To marriage, which adapts itself so readily to the counter-revolutionary campaign, the Communist city opposes the right to absolute liberty. "There is no more importance in giving oneself up to the sexual act than in emptying a glass of water," declared Lunacharsky recently before a mixed audience of barely adolescent collegians. A glass of water, nothing but a glass of water. Why not drink when one is thirsty? And Lunacharsky, the man who holds in his hands the future of the Russian people, recited amid the lascivious plaudits of his audience a sickening verse of Demian Bedny, "Under every bush a citizen in the attitude of a lobster, and a citizeness in the attitude of a frog. Congratulate them; they are celebrating a legitimate marriage!"

Thus spoke the Grand Master of the Red University.

We are not dealing here with an oratorical freak, a mockery directed against morals in order to tickle the ears of the crowd. Lunacharsky speaks in his capacity as Grand Master of the Soviet University, in which, from the secondary school upward, the physiological imperative is accorded a place of honour in the curriculum. The official Darwinism popularized for the benefit of little Communists includes 'sexual courses' illustrated by cinematograph films, of which the encouragements and the advice can quite easily be imagined. It is proclaimed in the name of science that nothing which is physiological should be alien to a Soviet citizen. Among the texts recommended for grammatical and literary analysis by the Mono—the Muscovite Section of Education—figures *Andrei Neputevyi* (*Andrew the Wanderer*) by Neveroff, a story so explicit that its meaning would not be lost on the most innocent. But—it cannot be too often stated—it is impossible to teach that the Bolshevik is descended from the ape without imposing on the pupil as the Communist ideal the morals of his Darwinian ancestor. The evolutionary theory expresses itself in Russia by a progressive and systematic degradation. In the eyes of the Soviet teachers, among whom the 'delegates of the scholars' also have their place, it is sufficient that the generative instinct exists in order for it to have complete rights of self-expression. When we remember that Soviet schools are 'mixed' it is easy to understand why they really are just so many disorderly houses. The diary of a collegian, Kostia Riabtzoff, published in the *Krasnaya Nov*, illustrates in a very instructive manner the *régime* of these scholastic

brothels, where children of twelve years misconduct themselves in the corridors and the consequences are furtively disposed of. The Marxian mud from which Bukharin has evolved his new Adam is simply mud.

But the years are passing. Russia will soon have only graduates who have received their diplomas from Lunacharsky. Where is the barrier that will then stem the tide toward physiological happiness?

At the bottom of the glass of water, to continue the metaphor, there is too often a residue costly for the drinker, painful for the woman who drinks it: the child, a kill-joy, condemned in advance, the only flaw which the Muscovite Don Juans find in the 'logic of nature.' Madame Kollontay rejects with contempt the two remedies recognized by the legislature, the authorization to procure abortion—a practice too dangerous to be of universal application—and the right to claim a pension, a practice which is rendered illusory by the poverty of proletarian resources. The only means of overcoming the difficulties, which will not injure either the health of the woman or the salary of the man, is the setting up of an insurance against childbirth, on the model of the insurance against fire, accident, and illness. Madame Kollontay has even taken the trouble to calculate the sum of money required for the maintenance of illegitimate children in the Soviet countries: 120 million roubles per year. To raise this fund it will be sufficient that every proletarian reaching the age at which he can take the risk should pay an annual premium of two roubles. For a payment of about seventeen copecks a month he will be permitted to empty with impunity

Lunacharsky's glass of water. The satyrs of the two worlds will be demanding Soviet naturalization *en masse*.

The young girls too! Madame Kollontay, Marxist to her finger-tips, completes and renders more explicit the theory of Lunacharsky. She has always, and not without reason, regarded the most crushing victories over the capitalist as secondary, as long as the flowers of *bourgeois* idealism continue to brave the social storms. The Russian *baba* is the enemy. As long as the *baba* remains counter-revolutionary the Leninist edifice is constructed on shifting sands. With all the ardour of an Amazon Madame Kollontay has therefore thrown herself whole-heartedly into the civil war on the 'domestic front.' All her nervous eloquence, her high administrative positions, her power of seduction, have been used to undermine hearth and home. Before she was promoted to be Ambassadress of the Soviets she was the ambassadress of a power still more important in her eyes within the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics—that of free love. And even when she was discharging in Oslo the business of her chancellery she did not cease to represent *in partibus* this eternal power.

Under the general title of *The Revolution of Morals and of Sentiments* Madame Kollontay initiated a collection of short stories, of which the first volume contained a title which is a programme in itself—*The Love of the Busy Bees*. As this book issued from the Soviet State Press its importance passes beyond that of a personal theory. Even when she is dealing with love Madame Kollontay remains the public servant. Her literature, no less than her reports to the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, bears

the *cachet* of official approval. Madame Kollontay describes for us the genealogy of the "Busy Bee," of the "Communist Eve," the issue of a social-democratic mother and a *bourgeois* grandmother. Love has followed the same stages as society. Darwinism is applied to love.

First we have the grandmother, Maria Stepanovna Olshevitch, a colonel's wife—rich, honoured, and apparently happy. Everything happened as in Chekoff's dramas. Maria Stepanovna meets a doctor attached to the Zemstvo[1]—that nursery of democratic dreams—tormented like her by a thirst for an "undefined idealism, a perpetual aspiration toward the unknown." They deplore together the obscurantism of the peasants, and commune with one another in the same confused dream of liberal renewal. One fine evening they let fall the book they are reading together, on the itinerant library system in New Zealand, and the cherry-trees in flower look on at their first kiss. But if for "the idealistic doctor" this is only an adventure without a morrow Maria Stepanovna intends to write love in her life with a capital L. She abandons her home, claims a divorce, and, with a magnificent shamelessness, installs herself with the man in whom she hails the Russia of the future. Hand in hand they go on to the conquest of their happiness, which they identify with that of the nation. They organize libraries on the New Zealand model. They learn for themselves the glory of deportation. But what an awakening after all this intoxication! The doctor allows himself to be caught in the arms of a dairy-maid, and Maria Stepanovna, faithful to her principles, declares

[1] Village Council.—TRANSLATOR.

that this must be a final rupture. She consoles herself by distributing primers to the peasants, and above all in raising her daughter, little Olga, the child of generous sin and of ardent passion.

With Olga we enter upon the "Social Democratic period of Love." Olga is Marxian, but since she is not yet Bolshevik she cannot be more than half Marxian. Torn between the fever of the senses and the revolutionary discipline, her life, like that of the Second International, is nothing but a series of compromises and contradictions. Her heart has pulsations which are too *bourgeois* to adapt themselves to the social law. Mistress of a celebrated exile, Comrade Constantine, she becomes enamoured, "stupidly, insipidly," of an engineer. She still loves the revolutionary, but she prefers to die rather than leave her capitalist. Such complications profoundly disconcert Maria Stepanovna, who does not admit of pluralism. She invokes the example of her life, she condemns false pity. These are the counsels of another age. In turn Olga passes from the arms of the *bourgeois* to those of the Social Democrat, and to put an end to these harrowing experiences nothing less than a revolutionary cataclysm is necessary. Constantine takes part in a "contemptible reform policy"; the engineer swells the number of *émigrés*. Released at last from her double yoke, and although she has already entered upon the autumn of her life, Olga turns to a young workman, Comrade Riabkoff. But Olga is the mother of a fine young girl of seventeen years, and Comrade Riabkoff is nothing but a sensual blackguard. One day the unhappy woman descends

upon Madame Kollontay: the Revolution is at its apex, Bolshevism rubs shoulders with incest.

The Ambassadress is almost offended at such violent indignation as she displays. "After all, what is there so intolerable and so disgusting in your story?" "It is their hateful calmness," declares the mother, "their horrible assurance; their cynical confidence that they are perfectly right."

She would perhaps have forgiven, remembering her own amorous past, a flaming-up of irresistible passion. She would have suffered and pardoned. Her daughter, Genia, however, has the most revolutionary contempt for the extenuating circumstances invented by *bourgeois* romanticism; between Olga and this pure Communist there is the same barrier which had separated Olga from her own mother:

> I do not understand, Mamma, why you are so disturbed. We have pleased ourselves, it is all very simple. I have not been violated, I have not sold myself to a man, we have done no harm to anyone. I am perfectly well aware of my duties toward the Party: what relation do you find between the Revolution and the kisses that I exchange with Riabkoff? We are not taking anything from you. Do you really wish to forbid Riabkoff to have a little pleasure apart from yourself? Do you wish to claim possession of Riabkoff by contract?

Before Madame Kollontay Genia presents her plea with even more frankness:

> A good deal of leisure is needed for cooing amorous ditties, and I am so taken up with committee meetings! In the times in which we live we cannot afford more than a few hours for love. It is a distraction pure and simple.

And suddenly, according to Madame Kollontay, tears began to roll down Genia's face. Was it repentance? A survival of capitalist prejudice? Not at all. This young Red woman wept at the idea that her mother could show such a shameful backsliding in passing a counter-revolutionary judgment on her sexual relations.

Bourgeois love is a sentimental virus which attacks the very marrow of historical materialism. That is Madame Kollontay's verdict. And, in order to vaccinate her sisters for ever against the reactionary contagion, she exerts herself to demonstrate in these devastatingly pessimistic stories that love is a permanent source, not only of personal misfortunes—which would be negligible incidents from the Marxian point of view—but also, and above all, of injuries to Communism. Madame Kollontay does not gloss over the suffering and the deceptions which spring from this *bourgeois* crime *par excellence* of love. Even the best, even the most orthodox, those who have a sufficiently large heart to associate the love of Communism with the love of a Communist, even these heroes are made by Madame Kollontay to mount an unmerited Calvary. All the men that they have the weakness of loving betray them and betray Bolshevism together. Well-fed and satisfied, they hasten to abandon their Busy Bees for "*bourgeois* wenches," painted wrecks of the old *régime*. Judged from any point of view, they are renegades.

Madame Kollontay may have been herself a great lover, but she has nothing but contempt for the stronger sex, a dispenser of ephemeral and pleasant emotions. In the three hundred tightly packed pages of her book

she does not permit herself the charity of depicting a single sympathetic male character. All her tenderness is reserved for the unhappy and slaughtered Bees. One should read under the symbolic title of *Sisters* the palpitating pages in which a working woman allows herself to take pity on a prostitute whom her husband has introduced one night into the home: while the man reels dead drunk the two women join their tears, torn by the same distress.

How are the Bees to be spared this misery and shame? How are they to retain their capacity for work and keep their wings? Madame Kollontay gives a reply through the mouth of Genia: the Bees must pilfer while they have the chance from the corollas and the hearts whose honey they have tasted. This sentimental Nihilism and this physiological licence are the price of the October Revolution, a revolution more tragic and agonizing than that of 1917. It meant the shooting of the Tatianas of Pushkin, the Lisas of Turgenev, the Princesses Volkonsky and Trubetzkoy of Nekrassoff.

Chapter Seven

"WITHOUT CHERRY BLOSSOM"

THIS is the title of a short story by Panteleimon Romanoff, one of the youngest novelists in Soviet Russia. There are barely ten pages, which are hardly to be included among the best works of this writer. There is nothing of the plastic masterpiece about it; just a simple human document. It is, however, a document so poignant, so scrupulously true, a photograph so atrociously exact of a whole epoch that it attains at a leap to the level of historic testimony. The absence of cherry blossom has become in Russia a synonym of Communist morals. The physiological imperative has no need of flowers to express itself. "It is considered the correct thing among us," writes Romanoff's heroine, a young student,

> to profess a swaggering contempt for all that is beautiful, for all that is clean. . . . In our communal lodging-houses refuse and dust accumulate, and the beds remain unmade. . . . It is not that our occupations do not leave us with any leisure, but we are bound to despise beauty and comfort. . . . The most frightful oaths have obtained the freedom of the city among us. And when certain young girls show signs of revolt steps are taken to familiarize them with all the resources of their mother tongue, there is a shower of offensive words. . . . It is this contempt for all traces of beauty and of purity which makes us afraid to display the slightest sign of human tenderness in our intimate relations. Young girls join their male comrades for

a week, a month, sometimes for a night. . . . Those who look for anything more than a vulgar physiology in love are regarded with a smile of commiseration as inferior beings. . . .

But the scent of flowers will sometimes make itself felt across an atmosphere charged with these physiological dregs.

"The apple-trees were blooming," writes this 'old-fashioned' student to her friend.

It was a glorious spring-time day; I was with him; a flower-seller offered me some cherry blossom, and while I was waiting for my change he turned a slightly mocking look on me.

"So you cannot do without cherry blossom?"

"No, it is better to live with flowers than without them."

"I have no use for all that," he replied with an unpleasant smile, "and I do not find myself any the worse for it."

"But why are flowers so distasteful to you?"

"Whether you have flowers or not, things always end in the same way. Why make a long story of it?"

After a long hesitation the young girl accompanied the student to the university dormitory. The room was empty, but their comrades might return at any moment. The student attacked her with the frenzy of a colt. . . .

The victim continues:

His hasty cry, like that of a thief, a complete disappearance of his usual calm, seemed to say that he had only one thought—that of succeeding before the return of his comrades. There was not a caress, not a kiss, not a human gesture, nothing of what I was expecting. . . . I did so want that he should cease to be a stranger to me . . . then everything would have been possible. . . . "Cut it short, cut it short!" he said impatiently. "We must not waste our precious time."

Wounded by his words, I stepped backward, but he took me roughly by the arms.

"Why the devil waste time in this way?" He threw me on the nearest bed. I tried to fight, to get up, but it was too late. . . .

And the epilogue of this romance: "We must put Vanka's bed in order," he said. "If not, he will understand, the brute."

That is all. The cherry blossom, it will readily be seen, was not indispensable. The spring blossoms lay neglected on the sordid floor amid the dirt.

Romanoff's short story is far from being the only literary photograph of the realities; it is only the most famous. According to an article by Ionoff in *Pravda* of December 4, 1926, the novel published by Serge Malashkin, under the somewhat Futuristic title *The Moon on the Right, or An Extraordinary Love Affair*, can rival even this 'physiological' production. The author traces the biography of a young Communist, a student of the Sverdloff University, in charge of propaganda in a student's 'cell.'

"I began," Tania recounts,

by mating with a leader of the Komsomol, but I got nothing out of this *liaison* except abortions; besides, I did not care for him. . . . Then I united myself, again without love, to another comrade, and from *liaison* to *liaison* I arrived at the figure of twenty-two husbands. To-day I am free, I pass for a shameless hussy, I smoke, and not only cigarettes—I drink, and I organize Athenian nights.

Even if one diluted with rose-water the ink with which Malashkin has drawn his picture it would be impossible to set down here the description of the saturnalia

presided over by Tania in her circle of "young-old men of the Komsomol who disport themselves." The essential point to be noted here is the manner in which *Pravda* regards these two works:

> In the region of theory we have the formulation and popularizing of a mechanical materialism; in the sexual domain an outburst of debauchery, an explosion of vice; in the realm of manners a conscienceless fooling and the cult of the obscene story, the shameful triumph of the bottle.

The gravity of these admissions is undiminished by the extenuating circumstances advanced by this journal. "All these phenomena," it says, "are due to the influences of the enemy class; the Communist front has been broken by foreign idealism." But has not the enemy class been suppressed in Russia, and have not foreign ideas long been muzzled? Are not Romanoff's hero and Malashkin's heroine faithful interpreters of Marxian physiology?

From the hundreds of letters which were received at the editorial office of *Pravda* in response to Comrade Ionof's article we can build up a most complete case against Soviet morals, which are indeed a direct application of the official doctrine. "Our youth," writes Comrade Bystriansky,

> is profoundly convinced that a lack of decency in sexual relations, as in the smallest details of daily life—filthy language, squalid dwellings, and the right to spit on everything and everywhere—is a real Communist duty. To declare that love is not an exact copy of animal instinct would amount to a betrayal of materialism.[1]

[1] *Pravda*, January 9, 1927.

We place our fingers here into the wound whose suppuration inundates the whole of Russia. Whoever is not prepared to reduce women to female animals, houses to dens, and speech to an eructation of blasphemies, is not a Communist; he is only a *bourgeois*. In a published lecture Professor Reisner remarks that:

> When a modern Don Juan takes it into his head to conquer a Célimène of the Komsomol, he dispenses with the preliminary politenesses, to use this noble language of amorous passion: "I feel a sexual need which you seem quite likely to satisfy: why get on your high horse? Are you nothing but a dirty capitalist?" [1]

According to the *Rabochaya Gazeta* of August 31, 1928, Bolshevik love-making reduces itself to formulæ even more laconic: "You want a man, I want a woman; let us hurry up."

Comrade Smidovitch provides us with the same revelations:

> Every adherent to the Komsomol, every student of the Workmen's Faculties, must give full and entire liberty to his instincts; every female student should accept the overtures of the male under penalty of being called a *bourgeois*, unworthy to figure in a Communist organization and to follow a course of higher education. If you refuse you are not one of us, and you cannot lay claim to the honour of entry into the Komsomol.[2]

But very soon Comrade Smidovitch smothers his temporary indignation; the revolutionary advance-guard continues the work of the Revolution in the domain of the tender passion:

[1] *Krasnaya Gazeta*, October 6, 1926. [2] *Pravda*, May 7, 1926.

> The manners of contemporary youth indicate a general remodelling of sexual relations, relations governed up to the present by the principle of private property. The Komsomol student rightly considers as a *bourgeois* the girl who sacrifices the best years of her life in order to keep herself intact for the benefit of a proprietorial husband.

Observe the result. A girl student writes to *Pravda*:

> The husband of one of my friends proposed to me that I should share his bed on the pretext that his sick wife was unable to satisfy his desires, and, as I rejected his offers with horror, he called me a narrow-minded *bourgeois* incapable of understanding the Communist theories in sexual matters.

The truth of Romanoff's short story is thus confirmed.

The work of the writer, indeed, falls short in most cases of the truth. The *Krasnaya Gazeta* charged one of its reporters to find out whether the students really treat cleanliness as a class enemy. Side by side with his notes based on the realities, Romanoff's descriptions are colourless and odourless. . . . No furniture; in place of mattresses, bags filled with rotted straw; windows which have not been cleaned since the glacial epoch. "Cherry blossom would be very much out of place in this setting," cries a student. "How can one dream of æsthetics in the midst of eternally dirty linen in a hovel where we have not even an old newspaper to take the place of a table-cloth?"

Romanoff had not foreseen anything so vile and pestilential, nor the physiological distractions of which the Socialist vermin are capable.

Comrade Grishkin, one of the chiefs of the Komsomol,

according to *Pravda* of March 8, 1927, was very assiduous in pressing his attentions upon an *employée* at a cinema. In return for some pleasant nights he promised to find her a lucrative occupation in one of the State departments. The young girl, however, remained attached to 'psychology.' She demanded registration at the Zags. She assured her lover that she was a virgin. This drew down a torrent of abuse: "Virgin—in our times! One would have to be a brainless *bourgeois* to believe that. Prove it, Comrade, and you can ask anything you like from me." The wager was arranged, and the young girl allowed herself to be examined by the judicial section of the Moszdrav—the Moscow Health Centre—where the experts gave her a diploma of virtue. She presented herself triumphantly at Grishkin's house, and he swore by the head of Stalin that he would take her on the morrow before the Zags. He even wrote his promise on a piece of paper signed proudly by his revolutionary title, "Member of the Komsomol." The young girl, completely reassured, abandoned herself into his arms.

The next day she dressed herself under the icy glances of a stranger. "Hurry up, it is time for me to go."

The astonished girl demanded explanations, and Grishkin did not refuse them.

"If," he said, "I had to take account of the promises that I throw about under the influence of the sexual instinct, I should be obliged to build a harem with six storeys."

The young girl went over to the drawer where she

had placed Grishkin's statement, but the scrap of paper had disappeared, and so had the certificate from the Health Centre. Returning to the monster, she threw herself upon her knees, imploring him to shelter her and keep her with him. But the Communist heart is armour-plated. "You will compel me to call the police if you do not leave my house." And as Grishkin moved toward the door she seized a knife and cut her throat. Death is no more merciful than life. The doctor of the district, summoned in haste, recalled her to consciousness. She was saved to brood over her shame. As a supreme favour she asked permission to stay for a few hours in the house of the representative of the Komsomol. She wanted to rest, to regather her wits, to think of the future. Grishkin, however, had no wish to 'create a precedent.' His revolutionary nerves were inflexible. He called the police.

Grishkin's declarations, faithfully recorded by the authorities, deserve to follow him from age to age:

> I do not love this young girl. I could not love her, because she comes of a social class which is foreign to me. It is not at all in my idea to marry a *bourgeois*, to say nothing of the fact that I am already married and the father of a child of two years. The incident of the bet and the written promise of marriage was just a little trick of no consequence. The guarantee has no legal value, and a man like me, controlled by his critical reason, cannot be expected to find any obligation in a simple distraction. As a true Marxist, I must resist all sentimentality.

Since, at the end of twelve years of physiological propaganda, Russia can claim, according to official

statistics, some two millions of 'true Marxists,' the Grishkins are legion—Russia swarms with Grishkins.

Then there is the case of Comrade Busch, whose private diary was published on February 14, 1927, in the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. He was a syphilitic Commissary who abandoned his innumerable victims after having infected them. In order to cut short their suffering he was in the habit of 'mislaying' a charged Browning in their rooms.

Comrade Moldoffsky, a Kharkoff schoolmaster, under pretext of "scientific observations," satisfied his sadism on young girls of fifteen.[1] There is the further testimony of Comrade Khazoff, whose private correspondence has been published, and who, in order to revenge himself for the scandal, threw a searchlight on the life of his comrades of the Komsomol. "I know students," he said, "who go eight at a time to cohabit with the same woman." This was the mildest of the revelations.

Even hampered as they are by the censorship the Soviet newspapers are a shocking mirror, reflecting in all its repulsive hideousness and lubricity the true face of the Bolshevik Eros. The *Bednota* (No. 2235) admits that no young girl at all careful of her reputation could ever venture into a Communist club or cell. The *Komsomoletz* itself (No. 35 of 1926), one of the official organs of Communist youth, published news items on this subject of a crudity which turned the stomach even of Demian Bedny, the pornographer-in-chief.[2]

The matter in question was the formation of a new front, "The Feminine Front." The sections and 'cells' of the Komsomol advanced to the assault on the villages

[1] *Izvestia*, April 9, 1925. [2] *Pravda*, December 3, 1926.

with collective physiological offensives for the conquest of the 'sexual reserves.' Red Russia has known its Rapes of the Sabines.

We are faced, however, with the eternal and inevitable conclusion: there is no compromise with extremism. Every licence has its tragedies, every licence has its comedies. The Red capital and the principal towns of the U.S.S.R. already possess confraternities which have sufficient revolutionary logic to push to the extreme the battle against *bourgeois* prejudices, including shame. True Communists have nothing to hide, even the loincloth and the fig-leaf are capitalist inventions. The class-conscious Marxist must throw off the tiresome encumbrances of an imbecile civilization, and march boldly in all the freedom of historical materialism. Under the influence of this propaganda a swarming of revolutionary nudities covers the banks of Moscova, the sands of the Baltic and the Black Sea. In the casino at Sestroretzk one evening there was presented a Charleston danced "before the fall." Bolshevik Adams and Eves frivolled as though they had never tasted the forbidden fruit. At Petrograd particularly 'class-conscious' Communists have presented themselves unclothed in a tram-car, while at Moscow couples have been known to appear in the same paradisaical state to register their marriage at the Zags. And on May 1, 1926, Komsomol students paraded with barely a suspicion of clothing, crying: "To the devil with shame, to the devil with morals!"

When a country has arrived at this state of erotic hysteria, when towns have become jungles, there is no limit to the extravagance of the senses or the corruption

of the mind. The foulest dementia naturally takes form. Under the title of "The Ethiopian Confraternity" the students of Perm have established an association which thus interprets the 100-per-cent. Communism preached by Comrade Soltz: "Down with conscience! down with shame! down with civilization! down with Europe! undress yourselves! take off your drawers! no more discipline! no more law!"

At Blagoveschensk the fine flower of the Komsomol has formed an equally radical society called "Parliament" —in mockery no doubt of the representative system— the laws of which prescribe drunkenness and theft. The subscriptions of members consist of fifteen litres of vodka per month. The students of the Voronege Polytechnic have proved that they have a better sense of the value of words, and have given their club a name which tells us a good deal about the programme followed— *Krasnaya Shpana* ("Red Debauchery"). And the students of the educational courses at Ostrog have even succeeded in outrunning their colleagues at Voronege in frankness. Their society takes its name from the grunting of pigs, "Khruk," and, in order to avoid any misunderstanding on this imitative harmony, the syllabus bears the sub-title "Society of Pigs."

It might be thought that we have here reached the extreme limits of salacity. But, as an old Slavophil poet put it, "We shall never understand Russia through the brain, she cannot be measured by the yard; whether she is angel or brute, Russia remains always the country in which everything is possible." At the very heart of the U.S.S.R., in the very centre of working Moscow,

it was only chance which enabled the police to track down an organization which had already existed for some years under the title of " Central Organization of Drunkenness and Scientific Luxury." Conducted by ten rascals of fifteen to eighteen years, this secret society ran over the holy of holies of Syndicalist Russia as over a medieval satrapy. To obtain a position working women had to yield themselves up to all the experiments of a crowd of sexual maniacs. As befitted a scientific institution, the " Central Organization " had, in addition to its laboratory of luxury, theoretical courses in sexual history and the technique of love, and, as equally befitted a Communist institution, it had its own Cheka, which terrorized backsliders and, when necessary, put a knife in their backs. In the name of outraged Socialism the procurator thundered against the chiefs of this pornographic organization, but little by little the functions of public advocate passed to the accused.

> The noble fathers of the party are fossilized from the physiological point of view. It is youth which holds the torch of absolute liberty over the ground we have gained. Liberty and luxury have always marched hand in hand, but they have always been stopped in their course by senile reaction. It is only luxury, scientific, organized, and co-operating with atheism, which can pierce the armour of *bourgeois* society and regenerate the psychology of woman.

More and more the defence took on the character of an indictment. Historical materialism spat into the faces of its judges the lessons of Comrade Lunacharsky, Comrade Sleptzoff, Comrade Kollontay . . . and the judges bowed their heads . . . they were only counter-revolutionaries.

Chapter Eight

SOCIALIST WRECKS: WOMEN AND CHILDREN

IT is possible to count on the fingers—for they do not amount to ten—the comrades of the gentler sex who have 'arrived' in the country of triumphant Leninism. Madame Krupskaya, the famous Red dowager, Madame Kameneva, President of the Committee of Intellectual Co-operation with Foreign Countries, Madame Lilina, Directress of the Academic Theatres in the days when Zinovieff reigned in Petrograd, Madame Andreeffa, Directress of Museums, Madame Lunacharskaya, Inspectress of Schools, Madame Kollontay, and two or three more *narcomtesses*, to adopt the significant *sobriquet* which has feminized the title of *narcom*, or People's Commissary. On a lower level a troupe of dancers, comedians, and prostitutes disport themselves in sables, and that is all. This pornocracy, however, would not appear to have anything to do with feminism or with Socialism; it merely proves that the physiological imperative has its profiteers as well as its victims.

There is an infinitesimal minority of profiteers to an overwhelming majority of victims. "I am used up," writes Churka, a friend of Tania in Malashkin's novel, "I cannot allow myself to burn any more, for there is nothing left of me to burn; all is ashes." "Life," adds the author, "is a slime, a swamp, where so many young lives are irremediably lost, and the only door of

salvation is by suicide." And, in order to vanquish the bitter after-taste which fills her mouth and her heart, Churka throws herself through the folding doors into the unknown. She is not alone; Russian literature, with its long procession of corpses, pales before the facts of daily life. "Columns and columns would be needed," admits *Pravda*, "to describe all the crimes that push our youth to suicide." This was on the occasion of the drama at the Mendeleef Institute, a drama of the kind which happens in thousands in the university barracks described by Romanoff. All the Communist hatreds were united against a young woman from the provinces, Kudriachewa, guilty of refusing love-making "without cherry blossom." The student in despair took poison, but they saved her in spite of herself, and the persecution and the obscene offers were renewed. The health of the young girl was seriously affected. For weeks she begged for a grant in order that she might go to the Crimea to recuperate, and eventually the medical section gave her the certificate which enabled her to seize hold upon life again. The students' 'cell' however decided otherwise, and secured a transfer of the ticket to a more 'class-conscious' comrade. Kudriachewa then shot herself through the heart in the presence of her tormentors. Her case was examined by the 'cell' among other "current cases," and a verdict was unanimously returned throwing the blame on the deceased for her lack of civic courage.

What can a young girl do against the tyranny of a 'cell'? Those who venture to complain to the authorities are nine times out of ten removed from the Komsomol,

and of the nine expelled four or five will be found unable to survive the dishonour. The 'cell' always has the last word. In order to get rid of his woman friend, a certain Danilowa, Comrade Izotoff, a pillar of Communist youth, according to the *Komsolskaya Prævda*, expressed himself in these terms to his 'cell' companion Tkach: "If you want to take advantage of my Danilowa you have only to threaten to tell every one that she is pregnant." No sooner said than done. Danilowa, panic-stricken, bought the silence of Tkach at the price of a *liaison* which enabled Izotoff to abandon the mother of his future child. Tkach in turn got rid of Danilowa, who thus passed into the hands of a third, and soon a fourth, comrade. So 'comical' a story naturally did not fail to go the rounds, and Danilowa became the butt of the whole 'cell.' Her four associates were the first to throw mud at her. After having suffered in silence for a long time the most offensive pleasantries, and realizing that her pregnancy was nearing its term, the hunted beast revolted and made a formal complaint to the administration of the 'cell.' It was received with Homeric laughter. . . . The next day Danilowa was found hanging in her room.

Bolshevism is a universal extinguisher. Convinced revolutionaries, disillusioned by the failure of Marxism, poets, stifled in an atmosphere where all beauty fades, and such women as Danilowa, alike seek refuge in death from Socialist philosophy.

They seek their refuge in death or in that variant of death which is prostitution. It is a logical alternative, for prostitution is the last alley where the feminine will

can still exercise its liberty in Russia. Those who hang on to existence prefer to traffic in their bodies rather than to place reliance on seducers who are always morally insolvent. Prostitution is the ultimate goal of the Nep applied to love. Women, like Russia herself, are offered to the *concessionaire*.

Judging by the inquiry conducted by Professor Fedorensky, Director of the Kharkoff Venereal Institute, the constant progress of the evil may be taken as certain, though precise statistics are necessarily lacking. The incidence of syphilis enables us to estimate the amount that must exist among the registered "daughters of joy," or, as Michelet called them—and it is above all true in Russia—"daughters of sadness." A few kilometres from Moscow a tourist found villages of which nearly all the inhabitants had faces hideously marked, and suppurating holes where the noses should be. In the Department of Novgorod 20 per cent. of the population suffers from syphilis. Dr Fedorensky arrived at the same figure for the peasants of the Ukraine, and if this is the state of affairs in the country, where *bourgeois* monogamy is still honoured, it is easy to imagine what culture beds of the evil are the industrial and urban centres, those homes of 'free love.' In the Liebknecht factory 592 workmen out of 600 were recognized as proved syphilitics. 30 per cent. of the school population in Moscow pays the ransom of Madame Kollontay's teaching in an incurably vitiated blood, and of 800 little prostitutes, whose ages ranged from eight to sixteen years, collected in the streets of Kieff, 300 were infected with venereal disease. And if one

must live—even at the cost of death—the deadly spirochete is sometimes a valuable financial asset. In his *Romance without Deception* Anatole Marienhoff, one of the Imaginist school, related that contaminated children demand money from passers-by with the threat: "Give me five copecks or I will spit in your face, and then you will have the syphon"—a popular name for syphilis.

Other vices naturally keep company with this. Of the brats locked up by State Providence 90 per cent. are inveterate cocaine addicts. "Your hair would stand on end," avowed Bukharin at the 3rd Congress of the Communist Party, "if you knew the true state of our abandoned children." Now at that time there were no less than 1,680,120 homeless urchins in a country that Lenin had promised "to turn into a flourishing garden." Since then, according to *Pravda* of March 10, 1926, Rykoff, the President of the Sovnarkum, has admitted that at least 300,000 children were condemned to the condition of stray dogs. In the heart of Red Russia, at Moscow, Madame Kalinina, wife of the Chief Magistrate of the U.S.S.R., discovered twenty-eight children living in an old asphalt stove.[1] In the same journal again (February 14), a prominent member of the Communist Party declared that in the vicinity of the stations at Omsk, at Samara, and elsewhere, a crowd of children, shrivelled and blue with cold, slept on the pavements and fed on refuse. They had not even the asphalt stove, only the asphalt!

The Russians, as Maxim Gorky said, will dream of stellar spaces, and not notice that a fetid pool is poisoning

[1] *Pravda*, January 26, 1926.

the air they breathe. The latest census caused even the maddest of the Marxian lunatic star-gazers to stumble into the pool. At Ekaterinoslav and at Rostoff abandoned children barricaded themselves in a derelict house and greeted the census officers with a shower of stones. At Odessa fifty street arabs buried themselves in blocks of masonry. Starved and ragged—declared the census officers [1]—hordes of children hid themselves in the mortuaries, in the drain-pipes, and in dung-heaps, which were so welcome on account of their warmth that children sometimes slept there unclothed. At Kerch a colony of young Alphonsos and courtesans, of whom the eldest was not seventeen, installed itself in a race-course in the neighbourhood of the town. 168 little monsters lived there for a year. Fifteen died there, and their bodies, under a thin shroud of pebbles and sand —the only shroud they had—emitted a charnel-house odour.

The more fortunate ones, according to the census officers, managed to accommodate themselves in the station lavatories, or to find a corner for a few copecks in the night shelters. It is difficult, according to one of these officers interviewed by *Izvestia* (December 18), to recognize human beings in the little groups of debilitated children who mingle in a sordid promiscuity. They look like heaps of refuse, from which now and then will protrude a wasted and filthy arm or leg. The filth is both physical and moral. Asked how they live, the majority will reply frankly that it is by theft. There is no hesitation, rather a sort of pride, the professional

[1] *Pravda*, December 17 and 18, 1926.

pride of the companions of Stenka Razin, shouting in the face of the Tsar's lieutenants: "Yes, we are bandits." Little girls announced their occupation with the same cynicism, often accentuated by ape-like gestures.

Bolshevism, like a Red Moloch, thrives on young flesh, but that is not its only crime. The proletarian dictatorship has perverted the working woman; it has made her the slave of the street; it has devoured its own child. An inquiry published in the *Rabochy Sud* ("Workers' Tribunal") revealed that 60 per cent. of the Moscow prostitutes were of the purest proletarian extraction—a figure which amply proves that the Socialist *régime* is unable to assure an honest livelihood even to its own *clientèle*. For some time the Communist sociologists, incorrigible statisticians thinking always in terms of statistical tables, have made a distinction between "working-class prostitution" and the vulgar prostitution of the streets. The first, a sort of aristocracy of gallantry, has its places reserved in the factories. These geishas of industry do not hesitate to polish their finger-nails while they are attending to the machines, or to wear black blouses over silk underwear. Entrenched behind the machines, they lie in wait for their predestined prey, foremen, trade-union leaders, accredited workers, and old revolutionaries, who draw largely upon the Socialist budget, and are as sensitive as undergraduates to the appeal of powdered faces and painted lips. Behind this proletarian *demi-monde* is the great contingent of the street, a sort of bilge overflowing on to the pavements, human refuse sold at cut prices. It is popularly known as 'violet' prostitution, on account of

the faces made black and blue by blows, by alcoholism and venereal corruption.

In order not to be misled in the labyrinth in which these spectres move let us take guides as thoroughly Bolshevik as possible, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. The latter journal announces that:

> The Tzvetenoy Boulevard is nothing but a great market of human flesh, like Sukharievskaya Place and Khitroff Place, the principal arteries of Moscow. Everywhere there are women who have lost health, beauty, youth, modesty, femininity. . . . Some of them are rigged out in shabby furs or shoddy silk; others wear old soldiers' overcoats.[1]

Prostitution, according to this official organ, shelters itself in the restaurants, the *cafés*, the schools of dancing, the public baths, the gambling dens, in the ruins of derelict houses, in cellars invaded by the mud of the streets, and in the night shelters, compared with which Gorky's underworld is a *bourgeois* paradise. The Ermakovka, as *Pravda* of December 18, 1926, complacently observes, has six floors. On the first are the incurable syphilitics, monsters whose faces are completely disfigured. On the third floor is a museum of freaks, a medley of cripples, dwarfs, beggars displaying their stunted and purulent limbs. Everywhere there is a chattering of prostitutes, from debauched young girls to toothless shrews. Even this inferno is outdone by the Soladovka. There everything is rotten, the oozing walls, like the human refuse piled up there—five or six persons to nine square metres of straw and rubbish. In 1926, of the 3000 occupants in this hospital for

[1] No. 856.

prostitutes and gaol-birds 2250 were ravaged by venereal disease. Since then the contagion must have affected the minority who had not yet been affected. There are no doors in the Soladovka, the rooms open out on to corridors, themselves crowded with Red wreckage. These rooms, common to the two sexes, serve, as might be expected in a truly Marxian establishment, as collective bedrooms.

This is not all. There are subterranean Ermakovki, Soladovki conducted in cavities that have been dug in the ground. Love in Russia is adapted to the essential nature of the *régime*. Cupid with his golden quiver and cerulean wings has become transformed into an ant, presiding in the dank darkness of the underworld over the 'physiological' mating of the Communists. He does not feel himself worthy to face the light of day. It is a simple coincidence, no doubt, though chance may be very suggestive, that at Odessa the principal dens of vice are in Rosa Luxembourg Street, which runs into Karl Marx Place. Petrograd holds the record, however. There love is not even an ant, it has become a carrion-worm. In the funeral vaults of deserted cemeteries on the confines of this dethroned capital there have been set up *macabre* brothels, secret distilleries, and markets for the sale of narcotics. Robbed of its soul, love inevitably finds its home among the dead.

Chapter Nine

LEFT-FOOT DICTATORSHIP

THE supreme pleasure of more than one Muscovite merchant, after he had swallowed a mixture of vodka, champagne, and liqueurs—a barbarous cocktail often seasoned with pepper and snuff—used to be to throw the bottles at the looking-glasses and decorate the faces of the chief waiters with mustard. These classic distractions were sometimes supplemented by more original amusements. Newly enriched peasants, their top-boots stuffed with roubles, would arrive on horseback at a restaurant, make a solemn entry, and order a canary served with *bearnaise* sauce. They would then order the carpenters to cut a new door, making an improvised *arc de triomphe* through which they would emerge undressed from their private cubicles. In justification of these deeds of prowess the wasters of the old *régime* had always the same explanation: "We are going to do what our left foot wants." This deep jest summed up the philosophy of the arbitrary, the metaphysics of tyranny and stupid destruction, the fundamentally Russian contempt for human dignity, which is the melancholy consequence of despotism at the top and servitude at the bottom.

As long as these drunkards confined themselves to a cook-shop Bolshevism, eating their canaries and paying on the nail for the pleasure of smashing up the furniture,

the caprices of the 'left foot' can hardly be said to have constituted a danger to the social order. It was a blend of good-humoured laughter with the joy of a happy Scythian, dancing and gambolling without regard to any flowers of civilization that might be crushed under his feet. Life was regarded as a permanent carnival, the celebrated Russian *masslenitza*, in which all eccentricities were permitted in the intervals of eating a couple of dozen pancakes, flavoured with vodka and garnished with caviare. Now, however, these frenzies are not limited to the night-clubs, their scene is the whole of Russia. They are carried out freely, without regard for the police, not at the expense of waiters and the warblers at *café* concerts, but on a population of 140 million inhabitants. The whole Bolshevik *régime* is summed up in this extension: the dictatorship of the left foot masquerading as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Let us hear what Bukharin has to say:

> Since our party is the governing class of Russia, as our Government has adopted a dictatorial form, there is only too strong a temptation for too many of our Communists to exploit their position. Lenin said that a guilty Communist deserved a punishment ten times as severe as that of a simple mortal [*sic*]. In practice the exact opposite happens. The title of Communist, particularly if it is joined to proletarian origin, assures an absolute immunity to delinquents. . . . The party displays an irresistible tendency to erect itself into a hierarchical system. The subalterns may profess to treat their superiors as comrades; in fact, they bow their backs before the chiefs. This melancholy development may be observed in any State establishment, if the vendor does not know whether

> his customer is called Bukharin, Sidorof, or Petrof. . . . Sidorof or Petrof, dumb cattle who must take what they are given. . . . The manners of our bureaucracy are truly odious; it would be necessary to reform them twenty times before we should succeed in inculcating into Communist Civil Servants even the most elementary rules of politeness.[1]

After Bukharin let us hear Kuybysheff, President of the great K.K., or Commission of Control:

"In the course of the first nine months of 1925," he declared, in his report to the Communist Congress, "the number of complaints against the misdeeds of the civil servants was almost double that of the preceding year. . . . Yet in 1924 it reached the pretty figure of 10,370." In order to appreciate to the full the eloquence of these statistics it should be added that, according to the report of Kuybysheff himself, a considerable portion of the complaints were of a "collective character." Let us add also that, for fear of reprisals, the greater part of the crimes remain an eternal secret between the criminals and their victims. We shall then realize the situation in its true light.

But what right at bottom have Bukharin and Kuybysheff to complain? Did not their master forbid, literally as well as figuratively, the use of white gloves? Lenin's cynicism in this respect had something to appeal to. Its roots were in the most inveterate traditions of Russian Nihilism. "It is a comforting sign," wrote Bakunin in his day, "when the crooks rally to the Revolution; it proves that the revolutionary movement is consolidating itself." "I am not a Socialist, I am a

[1] *Izvestia*, March 21, 1926.

crook," was also the declaration of one of Dostoieffsky's "Possessed." "The rabble," he added, "makes excellent raw material." It was a terrible prognosis: Socialism has become a pretext for rascality; in place of the Socialist Eldorado we have the kingdom of the rabble.

A time comes, however, when, for fear of finding its own work undone, the Revolution is obliged to take up arms against its most faithful allies, the 'crooks.' We are far from the time when Gogol was able to reproach the Russian Civil Service for accepting a pack of hounds by way of baksheesh. The Socialist bureaucrats are rapacious on a quite different scale from the Imperial *Chinovniki*. On the admission of Kursky, Commissioner for Law, the famous *vziatka*, or bottle of wine, never played a more prominent part in bureaucratic manners. The demands were never placed so high. The great Soviet Inquisitor, Felix Djerdjinski, exhausted himself at the superhuman task of trying to purge the administrative departments. Worn out by his watchings, foaming at the mouth, he expressed himself in the spirit of an ancient Israelite prophet in the most violent curses a few days before he died, a victim, perhaps, of the system he was attacking: "Everywhere, in place of the builders of Socialism, I find nothing but a set of prevaricators." It is always the same theme in the Russian Revolution: no Socialists, only crooks.

"The *vziatka*," laments *Pravda*, "has made its way into all the institutions." In order to improve even slightly the Commissariat of Transport it was necessary to brandish "the Revolutionary broom" with titanic

energy: 132 employees of the Department of Bridges and Roadways were summoned before the Moscow court: 152 employees on the Nicolas line were caught red-handed at theft with aggravating circumstances! Without *vziatka* it is impossible to get carriages, engines, or even tickets. It is necessary to provide *vziatki* in order to get the goods trains started at the advertised time, to ensure regular transport, and their arrival at their terminus. The trade-union sharpers 'purchase' the carriages which pass through twenty intermediaries, every one of whom levies his toll.

Here is one example, chosen from a thousand, of Socialist nepotism. The Ukranian Tobacco Trust presents us with the spectacle of a "Red manager" enriching his family with fraudulent advances. To get an idea of the frauds perpetrated in the Department of Revenue we have only to refer to the sentence of death on two inspectors and the sentences varying from one to eight years passed upon 381 tax-collectors, and for an exact idea of the morale of the Socialist police we may turn to Lokwitza, where the force, by a set of systematic spoliations, has bled the entire population white. The morals prevailing in the Soviet credit establishments are illustrated by the failure of the Industrial Bank, conducted by Tabelsohn, *alias* Krasnostchekoff, proprietor of a cook-shop before the Revolution, afterward President of the Far Eastern Republic, and subsequently a Communist financial magnate.

For an idea of the customs of the administration we can turn to the *dossier* of the Naval Construction Trust. Thirty-eight managers, sub-managers, and directors

were convicted of having sold the electrical apparatus of their department by auction, with the complicity of the employees at the port of Cronstadt and of the High Command of the submarine flotilla. To this may be added the equally impressive *dossier* of Kondratieff, former head of the General Staff at Izmailof, head of the technical services of the navy, and of seventy-two officers and subordinate officials found guilty of having wasted tens of millions on the sale of furniture. If the reader desires some samples of crime peculiar to a republic in which the criminals join hands with the departments he may turn, among a good many others, to the state of affairs at Nijni-Novgorod and at Kherson, where bodies of Communists, working together, violated practically every article of the penal code.

In July 1925 the Supreme Court sat at Nijni-Novgorod, a change of venue which was justified by the extraordinary importance of the case. Thirty-four defendants, of whom thirty-two were Communists, were charged. Among the Communists were the President of the Judiciary Corps, the members of the local tribunal, the military Commissaries of the district, the chiefs of the Ogpu—in a word, all the high dignitaries of the town, the fine flower of Leninism. The charge-sheet was a formidable document, which *Izvestia* summed up thus, in its issue of June 13: "Bribery with bottles of wine, arbitrary imprisonment, falsified verdicts, fraudulent exemptions from military service, felonies compounded by bribery, blackmail raised to a fine art." Another equally edifying case brought together in the dock at the court of Odessa the municipal, judicial,

and police authorities of Kherson. There were fifty defendants, all duly decorated revolutionaries. Comrade Sofronof, director of the administrative section, interpreted Marxism as the right to dip his hands into the State tills and to treat his female helpers as slaves of the harem. Comrade Ditmar, head of the police, a drink-sodden brute, whipped his subordinates and covered up the thefts of his mistresses. Comrade Vassilieff, Ditmar's assistant, laid hands on any young girls or women who had the gift of impressing him 'physiologically.' Comrade Chakhanoff, Knight of the Order of the Red Flag and master-blackmailer, shot the peasants in rotation. Each of them was an honour to his craft. Yudelson, the police treasurer, altered the registers and falsified the accounts. Titushkin, head of the ecclesiastical section, levied illegal taxes on the parishes and accepted bribes in all forms, in money, in kind, in feminine favours, and in barrels of secretly distilled vodka.

From year to year, from month to month, from week to week, the scandals increase, and they are all alike. The disease attacks the people's commissaries in the same way as the humblest quilldriver. The only difference is that the higher the *chin* [1] of the bureaucrat the more insatiable are his rapacity and his demand for amusements, and the more audacious the kicks by the boot and spur of the left foot. If it is true that Socialism is progressing in Russia its progress is a complete justification of Bakunin.

We may form an idea of this 'consolidation' from a single month, Socialist month *par excellence*—May 1928.

[1] "Official position."—TRANSLATOR.

In the Soviet Republic of Nakhichevan, the whole of the Government *personnel* was locked up for a *vziatki* orgy. Comrade Kubaloff, representing Satan, conducted the ball. It was a grotesque childishness, but not at all exceptional. In the Moldavian Soviet Republic the Ogpu laid hands on another Commissary of Justice, Comrade Prokhoroff, who sold the verdicts of his courts to the highest bidder. An equally exalted personage in the Crimea, Comrade Ibrahimof, president of the Executive Committee, went to the gallows like a vulgar capitalist. He, however, had really committed rather too many peccadilloes. Detachments under his orders went Janus-like round the country, 'punitive expeditions' on one side, and hordes of bandits on the other. As a public body, they extorted heavy taxes from the peasants for the maintenance of order, while as highwaymen, they extorted the last copecks by means of refined and sadistic tortures. Yet another Red excellency was put under lock and key at Kazan, Comrade Morozoff, Director-General of the Tobacco Trust, and, as usual, indebted to the proletariat for tens of millions wasted or stolen. In Turkestan there was a stirring up of mud which even the Moscow journals characterized as "an unprecedented Panama scandal." All the public employees and all the engineers engaged on a system of modern irrigation were sent to prison, a band who for six years had been laying hands on the wealth of "workers and poor peasants." Precedents, however, are quickly outrun in the U.S.S.R. While the righteous indignation provoked by these Southern irrigators was still vibrating, a fresh cause was found in the North, where the

directors and all the responsible agents of the Northern Chemistry Trust left their offices on the same day to expiate in the Ogpu prisons 100 millions squandered. *Vziatki* had been levied to the extent of 10 to 15 per cent. on the smallest orders. And this new Panama scandal had barely put Turkestan in the second place before it was itself eclipsed by another 'unprecedented affair.' The magistrates of Smolensk were convicted of most of the crimes that it was their duty to investigate and to judge.

By the side of these large abscesses, which ultimately break, Socialism is a shelter which covers everyday misdeeds. The co-operative employees and the Soviet administrations, according to the *Krasnaya Gazeta* of March 3, 1926, agree, without turning a hair, that employees sent on various missions should add to the expense the cost of their offerings to Venus. Abstinence in this respect might, in fact, upset the mental equilibrium of the good State servants.

One more example: according to *Pravda* of September 9, 1926, "responsible comrades," when they find a woman who answers to the "argument of their nature," do not hesitate to compel the husband to divorce her by arms borrowed from the arsenal of the Ogpu. The 'sexual needs' of a Communist naturally take precedence of the mean prejudices of *bourgeois* morality. A Communist remains a demigod even if the law sometimes in self-defence has to inflict upon him the treatment usually reserved for the enemies of the people. *Pravda* of January 10, 1926, has a good deal to say about the privileges accorded to the ruffians of

good Communist nobility. The famous Kherson judge, Soffronoff, prevaricator, master-blackmailer, and satyr, sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, was allowed to leave his prison every evening in order to dine with his accomplices in some of the most largely patronized restaurants of the town.

These are examples taken from the heights: we have now to descend the slopes of the Red Olympus into the most troubled and muddy underworlds of Bolshevism. There the dictatorship of the left foot becomes simply the dictatorship of the kick, the dictatorship also of the cudgel, of the knife, and of rape. We find the crook, the *apache*, and the hooligan playing at Socialism.

Chapter Ten

THE RED HOOLIGAN

WHAT exactly is the hooligan, this product which, despite its foreign name, is as truly Russian as the *samovar*, the *troika*, the knout, and the Soviets? All Bolshevik legislature has taken the precaution of defining him by a euphemism full of consideration for that "excellent political material" which is the rabble. "Any person may be accused of hooliganism [*huliganstvo*] who is guilty of committing acts disrespectful to society." [1] This is an extremely adaptable provision, plastic enough to meet all emergencies. Where does disrespect end? Where does actual offence begin?

The classical hooligan, no doubt, as we find him in Russian literature, is not a criminal in the true sense of the word, but an unsavoury blackguard in revolt against civilization, which he despises because it is beyond his reach. Too weak and too cowardly to rush to the assault on the established order, he is content to play tricks on society. He is Taine's "gorilla," putting out his tongue at the code which he cannot suppress, the imbecile who turns his back on all intellectual and social superiority. The hooligan, if you will, is a revolutionary whose direct action is confined to spitting in the face of passers-by instead of shooting them, to breaking the windows of the capitalists instead of blowing up their houses,

[1] Article 176 of the Penal Code.

shouting insults to women instead of 'nationalizing' them. The 'left' foot of the hooligan stopped short under the old *régime* at the threshold of theft with violence and assassination. The first effect of the October Revolution was to extend the field of activity. "Yesterday," writes Belborodoff, "the hooligan was still content to inflict a maximum of inconvenience on society by his extravagance and debauchery; to-day there is no difference between the hooligan and the real bandit." [1] The murderer of the Imperial family does not shrink from this admission: according to information which reaches us from all quarters, the *huligany* is almost exclusively recruited from the ranks of youth; the worst excesses are committed by citizens from twelve to twenty-five years of age. The most frightful hooligan, the Red hooligan, "he who kills, who robs, who rapes," is thus the legitimate child of the Third International. He was from three to sixteen years old at the time when the Revolution replaced the categorical imperative with the class imperative. He was raised in the school, if not fed from the feeding-bottle, of Communism. Belborodoff himself has to yield to the force of this evidence: "We are bound to admit that vicious tendencies have taken shape during the Revolution."

We are faced here with a very disquieting symptom. We find extremes meeting among youth. Side by side with examples of creative heroism we find the development of deplorable habits and disgraceful tendencies. These facts are forced all the more prominently upon the attention of the Soviets and of the Party from the

[1] *Izvestia*, September 16, 1926.

fact that the *huligany* are blossoming particularly among the Communist youth.[1] "The peasant crosses himself," says an old proverb, "only when he hears a clap of thunder," and in this respect the proletarian dictatorship has remained faithful to rustic psychology. It does not think of a lightning-conductor until a thunderbolt has fallen at its feet. Belborodoff's cry of alarm provoked in Communist circles very much the effect which might be produced upon the denizens of a swamp by a stone thrown into their midst. It was suddenly realized that the first Socialist republic was a cut-throat, and as usual there was a torrent of figures. Whether it is concerned with the production of coal or with moral anomalies the Soviet bureaucracy is there to supply, with the punctiliousness of an Ordnance Survey officer, columns of statistics affectionately brought to light. But the 'inventory' is not only Socialism as Lenin would have it, it is also sometimes a condemnation without appeal. The cases of *huligantsvo*, according to the circumstantial reports of Sergueeff and of Koltzoff, increase regularly by 33 per cent. every three months in the majority of Russian departments. In the department of Ivanovo-Voznessensk the number of misdemeanours increased by 78 per cent. in 1924, by 117 per cent. in 1925, and by 166 per cent. in the course of the first nine months of 1926. It has doubled since 1925 in the department of Iaroslav, quadrupled in that of Tver, and increased by 80 per cent. in that of Tula. In Nijni-Novgorod whole quarters are in the hands of *huligany*, and a statistical maniac has been able to calculate that the

[1] *Izvestia*, September 16, 1926.

total number of citizens massacred in a year by the hooligans in the department of Cherepovetz exceeded the number of natives of the department who fell in the Great War. In Moscow there is the same delirious hooliganism: 22,739 *huligany*, almost a foot regiment on a war basis, were hauled before the Justices in the space of six months, and of this figure 54·6 per cent. belonged to the working class.

Following in the train of Belborodoff, the highest Bolshevik notabilities, such as Lunacharsky, and, better still, Lenin's widow, Comrade Krupskaya, have not hesitated to denounce the evil as a revolutionary epidemic, and to name as its cause the low level of Communist society.

Why should the universal vandalism which Trotsky declared to be at the root of Leninism confine itself solely to destruction of spiritual values? Why amid the profaned altars and the sacked libraries should the "Kingdom of the Cad" respect human personality?

The gesture of the hooligan "punching the head of the President of the Duma" is a gesture in which, as we have seen, Lenin recognized a revolutionary exploit. All that separates the Master from the Communist underworld is the generalization of the precept. To the youth who has placed the brutality of his sturdy limbs at the service of Bolshevism anything of the kind is an act of revolutionary prowess, irrespective of whose head is punched. A formal admission that such an interpretation of Leninism is common among youth is to be found in so authoritative a writer as Sosnovsky, who writes:

The hooligan is crowned with a morbid halo in the eyes of the Komsomol. He is a sort of revolutionary hero. A grave responsibility rests upon a leader of Soviet poetry like Essenin, who has made the hooligan into a Communist ideal.

The hooligan adopts Socialism as the right to act as an absolute autocrat. 'Asiatic Marxism' aims at the triumph of individuality, and even at the triumph of the basest parts of the individual, physical force in the service of the caprices of the drunkard and the appetites of the brute. Read *The Gods Betrayed*, by Léonide Léonoff, a crowded and complicated novel, the picture of "an age which has suppressed private property and the soul and cut the umbilical cord between the past and the present." You will find there the current incarnations of Communism: Agney the hooligan and Mitia the thief. After killing the old general Agney places the gold epaulets on his own blood-stained blouse and hurries off to the photographer.

But truth is always stranger than fiction in Russia, and literature is always left behind by reality. "The Komsomoltzy," declares Comrade Zubkoff, the leader of the Communist youth at Novgorod, "have a surplus of indomitable revolutionary energy; their only mistake is to spend it as though they inhabited the forests of the Equator." At Bolchyakopany they made holes in the roof of a theatre and turned jets of iced water on to the people. At Chelbassy they undressed all the girls who did not belong to the Komsomol Party, smeared them with cart grease and tar, then they feathered them and made them march through the streets to the strains of the *Internationale*. At Loziervo every peasant

woman who refused her favours to the Komsomoltzy was ordered to pay a special tax, a litre of vodka per week, with eggs and flour. At Balierewo the gilded youth forced the 'non-party' peasants to chew bricks, while at Rostoff a band of young Communists, their brains excited with alcohol, raided the hospital, sacked the wards, and assaulted the doctors and patients.

Even in Petrograd Bolshevism sometimes transforms the Nevsky Perspective into a virgin forest where the inhabitants hold high carnival. After a night of wild intoxication the "Proletarian Culture Club" passed a resolution that it was up to 'scientific Marxism' to display its contempt for death by taking a live comrade to the cemetery. A certain Fokin, a responsible leader of the Works Committee, was chosen for the *rôle*. This *macabre* carnival happened to coincide with the arrival of Gorky in the revolutionary city of light. Lenin's hagiographer saw the Russian proletariat, that "collective Lenin," shouting prayers and opera airs in an earsplitting din behind the coffin containing the drunkard, who was babbling the most frightful blasphemies. The procession stopped before Lenin's statue in front of the Finland Station, the most largely patronized centre of prostitution in the old capital. Fokin then rose from the dead in order to take charge of affairs. The orgy ended with pistol-shots and some authentic deaths.

Huliganstvo is so profoundly and inextricably intermixed with Soviet manners that everyday life, even down to its least details, is poisoned by barbarous cruelty and Asiatic arbitrariness. In the factory, the schools, the barracks, those great breeding-grounds of Communism,

they play at the amateur hangman. Each torments his neighbour for the joy of seeing him suffer, with the joy of amateur torturers and Cheka apprentices. According to the *Rabochaya Gazeta*, the customary pleasures of the Soviet workmen are to make their comrades sit on needles, to squirt water into their eyes, to put out their cigarettes against the face of the first comer, or soak a colleague's clothes in petrol and set fire to them from behind, to undress the girl-workers and throw ashes over them. Sometimes there are less commonplace pranks. At the Elektrosol Factory on May 19, 1928, some of the Communists tried the experiment of an 'aerodynamic' enema on a 'non-party' workman. The effect of a pressure of five atmospheres applied in this way may be imagined. The Inquisition practised an ordeal by water; Bolshevism, more scientific in its methods, has discovered an ordeal by air.

The same gentle habits prevail among the students of the Workmen's Faculties. The epidemic of suicides which ravaged Russian youth ultimately made an inquiry necessary, and the investigations of the police resulted in a series of scandalous trials. The Communist Party had to accept the evidence that the Bachelors of Revolution, the future Doctors of Marxianism, had the caprices of ruffians and the amusements of gaol-birds. One example will suffice to illustrate the kind of outrage inflicted by a youth saturated with materialist logic on politically lukewarm and morally clean comrades. One day at Odessa the corpse of a student, Lubomir Diakin, was found. Too poor to buy a revolver, he had severed his arteries with a pocket-knife. For some

months the unhappy youth had been the scapegoat of the Communist 'cell' of his Faculty. Every day they had thrown filth over him, pressed dirty handkerchiefs into his mouth, and—as a climax of Marxian amusement—class-conscious Bolsheviks had sat naked on his face to obey a 'physiological imperative.'

Madame Kollontay's pupils, the Grishkins and the Buschs, when they condemn 'cherry blossom,' replace them with their own system of idealism. Instead of declarations of love there are arguments drawn from 'historical materialism.' But is not materialism, even when accompanied by the worst forms of decadence, a flower of luxury, an aristocratic prejudice, a hiccup of *bourgeois* morality? Instinct has no need of philosophical justification, and the true materialism dispenses with considerations on the supremacy of matter. Thus the Red hooligan presents himself as the best interpreter of Communism because he abstains from all interpretation. No exigesis, no gloss, no verbiage, those fig-leaves inherited from the *intelligentzia* with which Bolshevism, when it rises to the heights of its theory, endeavours to cover its plebeian nakedness. Materialism in the full meaning of the term will suppress all this, even down to the brief preliminaries which made Professor Reisner so angry. It will act without troubling to invoke Engels or Karl Marx. It will socialize women by a rapid offensive, just as Lenin, in one historic October night, threw the whole of Russia into the gutter. The apotheosis of the 'physiological imperative' is rape.

"Rape," according to the *Krasnaya Gazeta* of November 11, 1926, "is an integral part of our morals.

Women are no longer safe in the streets, in the restaurants, or in the offices of the Administration." The Soviet Institute of Criminology, with the evidence before it, arrived at the same conclusion in a work published at the expense of the State, *Problems of Criminology*. A single tribunal, that of Novo-Nikolaevsk, tried 100 cases of rape in 1926, each more disgusting than the last; the criminals, to quote the *Krasnaya Gazeta* again (November 14, 1926), did not spare either children or old women of eighty. This lack of discrimination is, however, written in the very programme of the Komsomol. Does not the *March of the Pioneers* contain the cheerful declaration: "We shall shame all the girls, and we shall not forget the old women . . . *boom, boom* . . . and that's that"? Observe the "We." Innumerable facts go to show that the plural must be taken literally. Where there are only a couple—the assailant and the victim—rape has nothing of the socialization about it which we have the right to expect from a community. To be really Communist rape must be carried out by an impassioned Soviet, it must assuage the appetites of a Bolshevik 'cell.'

From December 19 to 27 there was tried at the bar of proletarian justice a case, that of the Chuberoff Alley, which deserves to live in the history of human turpitude. Twenty vagabonds were charged with having outraged in turn a girl student whom they had enticed one night into a public garden in the heart of Petrograd. Twelve of the twenty monsters belonged to the Komsomol, the eldest, aged twenty-four years, was already entered as a candidate for the

Communist Party. The ' technique ' of the crime illustrated all the various revolutionary features. It displayed the best Socialist methods, a perfect regard for division of labour, a punctilious spirit of system. Some of the comrades overcame the girl, others laid a trap, and the chief of an important section of the Komsomol, a certain Kocherguine, who first had the idea of this little nocturnal diversion, kept a register of the participants and claimed fifteen copecks from each of them as a reward for his inventive genius. The most talkative of the band, this same Kocherguine, presented their defence in these terms: "We were simply amusing ourselves with a woman . . . it was of no importance; we are not wild beasts, we are not hooligans, we are quite ordinary young people."

It could not be better put. From the Communist point of view Kocherguine and his friends are precisely quite ordinary young people. Their exploit would not have attracted any attention but for the geographical importance of the ancient capital. If the Chuberoff Alley had not been in Petrograd the Press would have given it the usual ten lines in a column of news summaries. There is no town or village in Russia that has not its Chuberoff Alley. At the same period as this scandal in Petrograd it was rivalled by cases in the provinces. At Pokroffsky six eminent members of the Komsomol nationalized a young peasant woman, who afterward hanged herself in her shame. In the department of Tsaritzne twelve advanced Marxians outraged a woman agricultural worker and eleven railway men shared a girl of thirteen. The Ogpu could not allow itself to be

outdistanced in the realm of revolutionary materialism. Thirteen of its police bound a peasant and sacrificed her on the altar of Venus. Particularly disgusting details of this affair are to be found in the *Krasnaya Gazeta* of October 20, 1926, while no less atrocious is the case of Velikia Luki, a peasant woman six months pregnant, who was handed over to a group of *huligany*. But there is no limit to the Soviet nightmares. At Votkins a peasant woman was at the mercy of sixteen hooligans for fourteen hours. She was found bleeding, in a state of madness, on the outskirts of the village.[1] A worthy disciple of Madame Kollontay at Bunakovo, in order to avoid marrying a young girl whom he had seduced, handed over his *fiancée* to a dozen of his comrades, and, what is more, lent them his assistance.[2]

Communism has rewritten Andréeff's *Bezdna* in its own fashion. In the work of that *bourgeois* writer a young girl, followed by bandits, saw on the agonized face of her lover, an idealist student, and a pure example of the *intelligentzia*, a vague suspicion of concupiscence, and this for her touched the bottom of the abyss. In the Communist practice the student would have been one of the bandits.

Rape, in fact, in the Soviet countries is not a foul crime of highwaymen, hooligans, and the illiterate. The intellectuals also have their *huligany*. From the schoolroom benches the children learn to practise 'free love' and the suppression of the liberty of woman. The horror of Chuberoff has been outdistanced at Cheliabinsk

[1] *Pravda*, August 28, 1928.

[2] *Krasnaya Gazeta*, September 9, 1926, and *Izvestia*, No. 298, of the same year.

and at Kharkoff by young rascals of twelve to fourteen years. The children of an elementary school in Moscow proved themselves sufficiently precocious to violate the school-teacher employed to instruct them in Leninist morals.

Two cases, perhaps the most instructive of all, enable us to foresee what becomes of such enterprising 'physiology' in more mature years. The first is the charge against the President of the Lugansk Tribunal, who violated the wife of the Chief of Police under the eyes of her husband in the course of the saturnalia organized to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Revolution.[1] The second gave the *coup de grâce* to 'proletarian culture.' Three young authors, among the most popular of the U.S.S.R. and the most appreciated by the Communist public, Anokhin, Avronschenko, and Altschuller, the first two members of the Vapp, or Pan-Russian organization of proletarian writers, and the third the secretary of that organization—in short, true spiritual children of Lunacharsky—took a woman member of the Komsomol named Islamowa into an hotel bedroom, under the pretext of literary recitations. There, after getting her into a state of intoxication, they made her in turn the victim of their bestiality. Islamowa regained consciousness only to shoot herself with a revolver.[2]

This 'love' story sums up class thought, class poetry, and class morality.

[1] *Rabochaya Gazeta*, December 15, 1927.
[2] *Izvestia*, May 23, 1928.

PART IV

THE MOBILIZATION OF ASIA

Chapter One

THE WAR ON EUROPE

THE doctrinal basis of Bolshevism, as we know, is drawn from modern scientific and technical progress. It is put forward as the natural product of the clinic, the laboratory, the natural history museum, and microscopic analysis. The Bolsheviks, like all Russian innovators, are, therefore, convinced 'Westernizers'! Taking up the traditions of the Varangians, they would model the "peasant East" in the image of an idealized Europe. Rurik paved the way for Peter the Great, who, in his turn, made possible the advent of Lenin. These are the three giants who, with eyes fixed on the West, have brought about the gradual emergence, from a great anarchical plain, of the State which is to be a prototype of the societies of the future.

Communism has its own images. It accepts quite willingly as a symbol, in the prospectus of the Third International, the figure of the Europeanized peasant directing his agricultural machinery while he cons the pages of *Das Kapital*. Thus the worst poisons of Asia come to us under a camouflage of scientific Marxism. While Russia lets loose all the assaults of excited apes against the West the pseudo-European label is quite sufficient to confuse Leninism with civilization in the eyes of a misguided proletariat. That is not the worst of it, however. This confusion creates in certain Russian

Conservatives the infinitely dangerous idea that Communism is essentially a Western plague, that Russia is a victim of "putrid Europe," and that the only means of salvation is to bolt and bar the windows made by Peter the Great and opened by Lenin to all the evil vapours of the West, to take again the Eastward road, and look for regeneration in the fruitful depths of "Mongolian night." The propaganda of the International has thus implanted among its enemies errors as harmful as those of its partisans.

Lenin, to tell the truth, never wavered in his attachment to Asia. At a time when his name was known only to the Ochrana, and to a few disciples who gesticulated in the public-houses of Zurich, the future Padishah of Russia gave an unqualified welcome to the success of the Boxers in China. So closely linked in his mind were the success of Communism and the victories of Asia that he was transported with joy even at the fall of Port Arthur. "The European *bourgeoisie* has good cause to tremble," he wrote in the *Iskra*, a revolutionary sheet published by the *émigrés*, "but the world-wide proletariat can lift up its head; for the first time the old world is humiliated by an irreparable defeat." From year to year, under the pen of Lenin, these anti-European tendencies declare themselves with an increasing brutality. More and more the Revolution, though still in the potential stage, sets "backward Europe" in opposition to the real advance-guard, the Asiatic peoples. In *Pravda* of May 18, 1913, when it was an illegal publication, there was outlined the policy which was to triumph in 1927 at Canton and at Shanghai. The majority

International, that "camouflaged vassal of capitalism," might neglect the "immense deposits of combustible revolutionary matter buried in the Oriental soil" and "social patriots," like Branting, might ape the *bourgeois* title of "good European." The Amsterdam Conference refused the request of the Hindu, Dadabao Naoredji, but the Third International, a year after its foundation, opened its arms to the ambassadors of black, brown, and yellow 'comrades.' The famous 'Peasant Vatican' became a Mecca for all colonial agitators, achieving Lenin's idea of "an indestructible bridge between the East and the West, between the summits of the Russian proletariat and the dense masses of Africa and Asia, destined to make a clean sweep of the whole world."

The offensive will be irresistible, predicted Lenin in 1922 in a fiery article devoted to the jubilee of *Pravda*:

> China and India—that is to say, 700 million people at least—are foaming and bubbling. Add to these the other Asiatic regions, the colonial possessions, and, at the very lowest estimate, you have a good half of the world's population, ready for the revolutionary struggle which precedes the world revolution.

At the 5th Congress of the International Manuilsky, the *rapporteur* for "national problems," gave these statistical arguments in greater detail. "Every Englishman rules over nine slaves; forty-six million English command 429 millions of outcasts." From this inventory he deduces one truth: it is impossible to smash the capitalist powers without setting the reserves of enslaved humanity in motion; to compromise the social

"stabilization" of the capitals it is necessary to strike at them in their overseas extensions, their spheres of influence, and their protectorates. Bolshevik reasoning, as usual, clothes the system of the barbarians in a Leninist logic. Troubles lighted up on the volcanic soil of the East provoke European intervention, which, in its turn, must degenerate into wars, and wars, as Russian experience had already shown in an irrefutable fashion, bring together all the most favourable conditions for the development of Communism.

"The outlawing of war," said Lenin, "is a silly idea. Communists must accept any reactionary war, and then, at the proper moment, they must turn their arms against the Imperialists of their own country." On the brink of the abyss, a few weeks before he died, the father of Communism returned to this nightmare conception. He defended war—the international "argument of the bludgeon"—and pointed Bolshevism to its allies, the powers of Oriental darkness. "The fate of the universe will be decided by the peoples of the East, but it lies with Soviet Russia to galvanize and to organize the revolutionary activity of the Asiatic masses."

The pupils have faithfully executed the testament of their master.

In order to make sure of well-instructed battalions for the new Mongol invasions the Commissariat of War has created a whole network of military schools: the United School of the nationalities of Central Asia, the Tataro-Bashkire School, the Turkmene School, the Oriental Section of the General Staff Academy, and

finally the Communist University of the Workers of the East, completely militarized since October 1925. In addition to these educational establishments, specially provided for them, the future Tamerlaines and Attilas —delegates from all the Asiatic regions, even from the Korean Communists—are admitted to follow the instruction in schools of aviation, of artillery, and of chemistry.

The Soviets, however, do not content themselves with instructing the leaders who are destined to conduct the barbarous onslaughts of the future: they generously lend their own battalions to any State in which there is a ferment of anti-European hatred. The Mongol army, under the orders of Chay Bal San, a former Moscow student, is simply a younger sister of the Red army, swollen by a plethora of Soviet officers. Thanks to the efforts of Comrade Rink, military *attaché* of the U.S.S.R., 'Bolshevik specialists' have found their way into the Afghan army. Since the summer of 1925 Russian officers have gone in crowds to Canton, as have also a certain number of German officers, while the missions of Generals Sun Pin and Hu-Han-Min, and the delegation of the Vampu School, who had stayed for some time in Moscow, worked for months to complete the military and financial conditions for co-operation between Russia and the Southern Chinese forces.

Next to the regiments comes the material of war. The Soviets have not ceased to set up in the east of Russia factories for aviation, artillery, and asphyxiating gases, at Perm, at Orenburg, and, above all, at Omsk. They have made a magnificent armament centre of their

Siberian military area and a great provisioning base of the Port of Vladivostock.

And finally, after poisons and instruments of war, they have set up propaganda factories for the wholesale exportation of social virus, of revolutionary venom.

The reader may represent to himself a demoniacal *séance* within the Kremlin, held under domes from which the cross and the eagle have been removed. All around there are statistical tables, diagrams, diplomatic dispatches, reports of agents, tickets—all the equipment of a great State placed at the service of a crowd of malefactors. Bending over cards, stained with blood, the principal incendiaries look out the most propitious place for some discreditable coup. Gravely, with the assistance of its agents, the committee will take the pulse of the yellow or black continent. It registers the contortions of fever and delights in the tumultuous music of delirium. It sets itself to estimate the capacity of national and moral resistance. Sweet in its nostrils are the odours of the Moroccan charnel-house or of the blood shed at Canton and Shanghai. The bodies smoke, the conflagration extends. And to keep the flames alive the International blows on them with its poisoned breath.

Nowhere, it must be admitted, does Bolshevik propaganda meet with less resistance than in the East.[1] The

[1] The conflicts between the Moscow Government and that of Mukden or of Nanking do not contradict this fundamental truth. It would be easy to show that such conflicts arise only in two special sets of circumstances—a double exception which proves the rule. Either it is because the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs is following the traditional policy of the Empire, or because a Chinese Government Europeanizes itself to a point at which it becomes less Asiatic than Communist Russia.

Great Wall of China does not stop it. Speaking at the 2nd Congress of the International, Lenin declared:

> The Soviet idea is so simple, it is so accessible to the great masses of the population, that it can acclimatize itself anywhere, among the Chinese or the Hindus: we shall certainly one day see the Soviet form of government established in these countries.

The fact is that, in the hands of the casuists and strategists of the Third International, the "Soviet idea" is not an unchangeable entity, a fixed category: it is, on the contrary, infinitely elastic, adaptable to any latitude and pliable according to the demands of the 'general upset.' Little matters it, therefore, that the East, the principal theatre of Bolshevist propaganda, is not exactly Marxian in the strict sense of Marxian terminology. The successors of Karl Marx are in no way embarrassed by this 'obscurantism'; they are content to Orientalize the Communist Manifesto by generalizing the call to revolt. "Workers of all countries, and oppressed peoples, unite!" That is the rally and war-cry when the International wishes to harangue at once all the varieties of its *clientèle*.

The formula is as complete as anyone could wish, and of an indefinite application both as to space and as to time. It embraces the entire East, since the East, as a whole, is composed *a priori* of oppressed peoples. But as the oppressors are not homogeneous in their nature it is reasonable that the methods of propaganda should be fitted exactly into the social and political mosaic of local conditions. In a course on direct action at the Communist University of the Peoples of the East,

Stalin, the man who practically wields the sceptre of the Tsars, has given in detail the revolutionary plan for the East. The Eastern countries, according to his teaching, are divided into three characteristic groups, of which each one demands a tactic of its own. In countries like Morocco, for example, where there is no industrial proletariat and the local *bourgeoisie* forms a *bloc* hostile to European capitalism, Communists must collaborate in the creation of a single national front against the imperialists. In states like China and Egypt, where the *bourgeois* group is split up, but without having yet joined itself to the imperialists, the Communists must apply themselves primarily to bringing about an alliance between the nationalist *petit bourgeoisie* and the revolutionary workers. Finally, in countries like India, where *bourgeois* elements have sided with the imperialist *bourgeoisie* and fight against the work of liberation, it is the proletariat alone that will have the honour of leading the national movement.[1]

The "Soviet idea," it will be seen, differs radically according as it is exported east or west of Moscow. A universal chameleon, Stalin does not hesitate to don the fez and the turban in order to conform to the local colour. Citizen of the Socialist Fatherland in Paris, in London, or in Moscow, he is a Riff in Morocco, a Chinese in Shanghai, a Hindu in Bombay, and an Egyptian within the shadow of the Pyramids. There is no more national—nay, nationalist—organization in the East than the Third International. Under the pretext

[1] The 6th Congress of the International fixed all these rules of colonial strategy under a definite and compulsory form.

that, provisionally at least, class interests and national interests are one, it erects itself into the champion of every African and Asiatic Piedmont. It holds out the right hand of fellowship to yellow Cavours and negro Bismarcks. It renounces the privileges and treaties that Russia enjoyed as a European State; it becomes the arsenal, the powder-magazine, the banker, of the most insignificant tribes that will only claim independence and murder Christian missionaries.

Thus are explained the deep and ineluctable reasons of the revolutionary *Drang nach Osten.* Bolshevism follows the line of least resistance. Unable to carry the European citadel by storm, it endeavours to do it by treachery; it bargains unblushingly with all the enemies of the West and finds its reinforcements in the underworld of human savagery. It is thus an unforeseen application of the classic precept of Chaadaeff, the spiritual father of Bolshevism: "Anything is legitimate which helps the victory of the Revolution." Let the Revolution triumph, though it leave not a blade of grass on the ground trampled down by the horsemen of the Apocalypse! The "indestructible bridge between Europe and Asia" means the road to the West, open, under an idealistic camouflage, to the rush of the vandals against civilization . . . a bridge of which Borodin came very near to laying the first stones at Canton.

Leninism here is simply applying on a universal scale the recruiting methods which assured it the victory in Russia. Were not the first executioners in Russia Chinese? The service demanded of Asia by the Soviets to-day is that she should be the executioner of Europe.

The Cheka has known no more conscientious torturers than the wild exotics regimented by Trotsky in the service of the terror: indifferent to the sufferings of another race, they have worked with the mathematical precision of the guillotine. To decapitate Europe of its *élite*, they would display the same incomparable technique. Insurgents against the whole European order, they would be all the better disposed to destroy one of its aspects—the capitalist order. Unconscious of the meaning of European civilization, they would have no spasm of pity before the treasures of *bourgeois* culture. What better workmen could be found for an enterprise of universal demolition? Let Europe perish, since that is the only way to the destruction of the capitalist order!

Whether it is a question of executing Europe or Russia, the same methods are applied with the logic of madmen. To second the efforts of the executioner war is declared on the mentality and the faith which constitute too strong a buttress against the Oriental invasion. Europe, like Russia, must be despiritualized and de-Christianized. Just as scientific atheism recruits its allies from among the Klikushi at home, the International seeks its auxiliaries abroad in Islam, in Buddhism, in Taoism, and in the most barbarous fetishism. In the East, as in Russia, an alliance is formed with the sorcerers against Christianity.

As early as 1920 a propaganda cunningly adapted to the Chinese audience of the Komintern—Revolutionary students and half-starved coolies—denounced Christianity as an instrument of Western penetration and capitalist domination. An "anti-religious federation"

was formed at Pekin, an "anti-Christian League" at Shanghai. The Bolshevized youth of Canton demanded that the authorities should forbid the Gospels and the Bible, and prohibit foreigners from teaching and holding religious services in Chinese schools. In the province of Hu-Nan the celestial students in the Christian schools declared a strike, tore up the Bibles, and scattered the pages in the mud. At Shanghai the students distributed proclamations in the purest Muscovite style, accusing Christian proselytism of "destroying Chinese civilization" and "delivering the wealth of China up to foreign exploitation." "Down with Christianity!" according to *Izvestia*, is in China a cry synonymous with "Down with Imperialism!" By Imperialism here we must understand the influence of "backward Europe" on the advanced peoples of Asia, that eternal cradle of humanity, even of Socialist humanity.

China for the Chinese, Asia for the Asiatics! The strident nationalism of these formulæ fits very well into the Bolshevist system; but let Europe claim the same privileges, arrogate to herself the right to independence, and ask for the treatment which Moscow reserves for the Congolese! Then the Third International will hasten to cry "Heresy" in the name of Communism. Europe is not for the Europeans; she is vowed to the dictatorship of a single class, which is the simple advance-guard of the Eastern terror.

Chapter Two

MONGOLIAN SOCIALISM

THERE is a complete harmony between the advance-guard and the general body of the troops. The Third International regards the East as instinctively Bolshevik, just as Lenin in the Eastern mind has a settled claim to a place at the side of Confucius and Mohammed.

Thus sings the poet, Mirsa Mahmed Ali:

> Lenin is not dead, since his thought still remains with us. . . . Lenin revered Islam, and Islam in its turn holds him in reverence. Future ages will dedicate themselves for all eternity to him whose great heart suffered for Persia.

In the Transcaucasian Steppes, while the sheep is being consumed in the sacrificial flames, a blind musician thus hymns the splendour of the new Messiah:

> Once in a hundred years a great man comes to birth and shows himself like a vast mountain to the people of his land. Never yet has the world seen a man of Lenin's stature. . . . He was a great man for the whole of humanity. . . . He was the sun rising in the sky.

The Buriats and the Mongols represent Lenin as a giant, with great mustachios, dressed in a smock bedecked with precious stones and proudly seated on a foaming charger. He is the "people's Grand Seigneur," the divine cavalier, who has overthrown the Tsars. "Allah guarded Lenin in his palace fifty days and fifty

nights," chant the Turanian Communists. "He breathed into him some of his own wisdom, and Lenin came down to earth in all the brilliance of the celestial glory. When he had assured the happiness of the nations he returned to the bosom of Allah. The name of Lenin spells happiness."

In India, Japan, and China the bards of the Komintern weep over the passing of the great chief:

> The negro weeps among his bamboo-trees, the coolies weep on the sands of China, the sun sets over the Kremlin, and the weeping earth sends up a sigh, Lenin is no more, Lenin is no more. . . .

"We never saw him," sigh the Hindu poets:

> We never heard his voice; but he is nearer to us than a father. In April was he born, and in January he died. Therefore, let us dress ourselves in bright garments in April to sing glad songs, and don the black robes in January to chant our sad hymns.

Pravda is melted by these Communist Arabian nights: the divinization of an inveterate atheist, Lenin in a turban and slippers, enjoying the consolations of the houris. "Centuries are needed to create a popular hero," writes the representative of the Central Committee, "but it has needed only a few years to transform Lenin into a mythological personage."

Asia is right. By birth, as by education, the leaders of the Third International are not Europeans. If we did not know of Lenin's Tartar origins, his Mongolian expression, the protruding cheek-bones, oblique eyes, and the sensuality of the lips and nostrils would tell us

that we were in the presence of a perfect example of the Turanian type. The Master numbered in his spiritual ancestry violent Semites, half-breeds, who suffered the invasion of the Golden Horde, Scythians smothered under a Slavonic garb. One powerful Jew, Zinovieff, has had the strings of the world revolution in his hands; to-day they are held by Stalin, another Oriental interloper. And not a trace of that classical education—the absence of which, according to Chaadaeff, was to spell the doom of Russia—exists to temper the sharp exoticism of these origins, to calm the fermentation of a hyperacid blood, and discipline the extravagances of the brain. After the Lithuanian Ghetto and the bazaar of Koutais these leaders were formed in the desert places outside Europe. They bring with them a ferocious accumulation of hatreds, a schooling in diabolical revenge under colour of moral, social, and intellectual nihilism. A bird's-eye view of Russian Bolshevism presents it to us as a Semitic doctrine applied by half-educated Asiatics. It has borrowed nothing from the West except its technical equipment, the mechanical processes to which its 'economic materialism' and its dreams of universal domination—the soul-less machine to industrialize production and the killing machine to industrialize war—readily adapt themselves.

Yes, Asia is right. She recognizes Lenin as her own, not only by the atavism proclaimed in that Mongolian mask, but by the structure of his mind, the Oriental mould of his thought. 'Scientific Marxism' loses its complexity and its fine shades of difference when it passes through the mental sieve of this amazing simplifier.

Pruned and dried it is no more than a string of comminatory sentences which naturally take the form of brief and imperative aphorisms, like religious texts. Lenin's Socialism is that of a barbarian of genius, but a barbarian all the same. This pure Asiatic has invaded sociology, politics, and history as his distant ancestors invaded the pleasances of the Roman Empire. He has swallowed up space, battered down obstacles, and gained the summits. Then, at full gallop, he has regained the steppes, to furbish up his arms. Lenin had all the qualities that go to make the conquerors and the prophets of the East. This plump 'intellectual,' with the bilious complexion, eternally sitting at his desk, belongs to the line of Genghis Khan and Tamerlaine. Social revolutions reduce themselves in his mind to the Asiatic idea of invasion, and the special Empire that he has created—the Third International—reproduces in a striking manner the characteristics of a horde of nomadic conquerors.

"The Executive Committee," declared Zinovieff one day, "may pitch its tent in London or in Moscow, in Berlin or in Paris." The Third International is always ready to follow the progress of revolutionary invasions, as it is always ready to beat a retreat to the extreme confines of Asia in case of danger. At the time when the Germans were threatening Petrograd Lenin proposed a flight to Kazan—the Tartar town *par excellence*—in the Urals, if necessary, or even in the snows of Kamchatka. . . . Russia might be trampled underfoot by the German invader; the essential thing was to save the "Soviet idea," to find, no matter where, in the desolation of the swamps, the ice or the sands, a plot of ground large

enough for the "revolutionary tent," that travelling Acropolis of Bolshevism, and to raise the bloody standard of defeated nomads.

Victorious, we find the Red horde, like the Golden Horde,[1] established at Moscow in the full glory of Byzantine Rome. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries live again under the auspices of 'scientific Marxism'; they are revived in a form even more painful than the epoch in which the princes of Muscovy kissed the stirrups of the Mongol conqueror. From being political, the burden of Asia has become also religious, moral, and intellectual. Less tolerant than their predecessors, the Tartars of to-day impose upon their victims their beliefs, their unclean wonder-workers, and their sordid morals. 100-per-cent. Socialism is a 100-per-cent. burden.

But while Asia celebrates her witches' Sabbath on the very doorsteps of the Kremlin, a whole group of Russian thinkers, declared enemies of Bolshevism, a school whose very title is a programme and a standard —the Eurasiatic School—continues to look toward Asia for deliverance, to Asia, from which the ancient empire of the Tsars was already a corridor of escape!

"The Eurasiatics," writes M. Pierre Savitzky in *Evraziisky Vremennik*, "deny that there has been universal progress. . . . The Communist saturnalia is the crown of two hundred years of Europeanization."

Prince Trubetzkoy develops this argument in declaring that Russia has bowed to two tyrannies in the

[1] The Golden Horde was the westernmost kingdom founded by the Mongols in the Middle Ages. It extended over Southern Siberia and South Russia.—TRANSLATOR.

course of her history. One, the Mongolian tyranny, was fruitful and benevolent, while the other, the European tyranny, inaugurated by Peter the Great, was destructive and harmful. The tree must be judged by its fruits. Two centuries of the "Tartar yoke" resulted in the crystallization of an orthodox Russia, whereas two centuries of the "European yoke" have given birth to the Soviet Federation. It is a specious argument, naturally calculated to seduce lovers of historical paradox, but resting upon a singularly crude and materialistic conception of European progress, an Asiatic conception—in fact, a Leninist conception. If Russia has fallen into the clutches of 'historical materialism,' and an Empire which looked European has become transformed into the U.S.S.R., it is because it has not had time or strength to complete the work of Peter the Great, by borrowing from Europe not only her machinery, her guns, and her factories, but also the true quintessence of progress, the European spirit. If Russia alone has caught the contagion of the Communist disease it is because she has remained Asiatic under a thin Western veneer; it is because she has been "Eurasia."

Russia, that immense shapeless plain, stretching between two worlds, was the predestined battleground of the East against Europe. She has been Asiatic with the Khosars, the Tartars, and the Soviets, and European with Rurik and a long succession of 'Greats'—Romanoff Peter, Catherine, and Alexander. This intertwining of influences and alternation of tyrannies has ended by digging up the Russian soil to such an extent that it has gradually become an historic receptacle, a ground always

open to new masters. The pressure of a foreign will has always been needed to make something positive of Russia; her own *rôle* has always been "passive and feminine," as Merejkoffsky put it, overrun by too many invasions, lacerated by too many rapes, to be able to constitute a patrimony of tradition, an independent personality. After Chaadaeff and Merejkoffsky, that implacable observer, Saltykoff, in *The Two Russias*, revealed this incurable poverty in all its nakedness:

> Are not the extremes and the contradictions of the Russian soul the expressions of the primordial anarchical chaos which comes to us across the abyss of the ages? Our natural tastes are for rudimentary and uniform ideas. We are afraid both of the heights and the depths, and we are afraid of complex ideas. A flat and crude simplification is what we look for, and with all this there goes a hatred of organic unity and logical forms. We have an amazing lack of curiosity, the intellectual laziness that so much discouraged Pushkin. And the result of this psychology is that we have no real link with civilization, because civilization is complex and we love simplicity. Civilization means love and life, while we, children of chaos and of death, are unable to experience the joy of living.

"The Emperor," said an ambassador at the Court of St Petersburg at the beginning of last century, "is all-powerful; he can even alter the date of Easter Day." This diplomat was wrong in only one word. Put the word "authority" in the place of "Emperor" —no matter whose authority, provided it is the unchecked expression of Oriental despotism—and the most grotesque possibilities can be realized by a gesture, whether the power is claimed by divine right or emanates

from the dictatorship of the proletariat. Has not a crowd of atheistic adventurers outrun the power of a monarchy anointed by God? Have not the Soviets indeed changed the date of Easter Sunday?

Joseph de Maistre put his finger on the root of the evil as far back as the beginning of the nineteenth century, at the height of the Empire. He noted that the fear of the Tsar was strangely adapted by the people to a complete contempt for his power. It was the direct result of the original vices pointed out by Saltykoff—"intellectual laziness, fear of organic unity, aversion to logic." It is this synthesis of contradictories, cutting across all our Western ideas, which has rendered possible the existence, above all the continuance, of Bolshevism, that caricature of the Imperial *régime*.

For the Russian people, instinctively anarchist, but slave from indolence and habit, remains alien to the idea of the State: it has always confused it with the policeman, who is at once feared, tolerated, despised, and deceived. Yesterday it was the Tsarist police, the day before yesterday "the third section," further back in time the assassins of Biron, the *strelzy* of Sophie, the *oprichniki* of Ivan the Terrible; to-day it is the Cheka and the Ogpu.

The essential cause of all the Russian cataclysms is in this inability to assimilate the very principle of authority. It explains the collapse of ancient Muscovy in the melting-pot of "the stormy days" and the collapse of the Empire of Peter the Great in the melting-pot of Communism. Twice the "rumblings of the primordial anarchical chaos" have swept away the superficial

The sole historical significance of the Russian Revolution lies in this collapse of the work of Peter the Great. If it be true that the sole excuse for a revolution lies in the impossibility of progress without violence, Bolshevism, which unites violence to reaction, is indeed an unheard-of type of revolution. If it is a Russian catastrophe it is also a European defeat. Russia, as the hinterland of Europe, was also the advance-post of the West against Asia, Europeanizing the East in her turn and forming a bulwark of civilization. To-day, after a feverish reversal of *rôles*, Russia undoes the effort of two centuries, repudiates her historic mission, and becomes the iconoclast of humanity. After having for eleven years eaten into the grey matter of the Russian brain, the Bolshevik doctrine now attacks the brain of the world.

Only at the cost of this monstrous sacrifice, in a total darkness, can the Third International proclaim the universal dictatorship of the beast:

Ex Oriente nox!